

David Evans 1794 4473. a 51

Religious Gratitude:

Samuel BEING *Davis*

Seven Practical DISCOURSES
on the following Subjects,

V I Z.

- I. THE Exaltation of God, Man's Duty and Happiness.
- II. THE Preheminence of social Worship.
- III. THE Advantage of religious Solitude.
- IV. THE Origin and Progress of Divine Worship by religious Songs.
- V. NEW Songs the Claim of new Mercies.
- VI. THE Kingdom of Christ a new Kingdom.
- VII. THE new and surprizing Privileges of the new Nature.

To which is added

THE Cave of Machpela, or a religious Improvement of GENESIS xxiii. 9.

By CHARLES OWEN, D.D.

L O N D O N:

Printed for R. HETT, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry; and sold by Mr. HIGGINSON of Warrington, Mr. ROMB of Bristol, Mr. TOZER of Exon, Mr. WHITWORTH of Manchester, and Mr. STOKES of Dudley.

M DCC XXXI.

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T O

Richard Rutter, *Esq;*

SIR,

THESE Discourses being entirely owing to your relative Mrs. *R. Hallywell*, naturally dictate you for their Patron; and as they are calculated in favour of common Christianity, I presume they will not be disagreeable to a Gentleman who governs himself by maxims of virtue and piety. The inscribing this to you I hope will not be an unpardonable trespass upon the privacy of your temper, tho' I know you are absolutely in the sentiments of the great Moralist, out of whom I send you your favourite Lines,

A 2

Nullis

DEDICATION.

*Nullis nota Quiritibus, ætas per
tacitum fluat
Nullo cum strepitu, dies Plebeius,
moriar Senex.*

THIS Dedication to you is not that I may raise subsidies of praise to myself, but to express the particular regards I have for Gentlemen of your Character. Universal Benevolence to mankind, which is one of your distinguishing claims, as it is the glory of the Divinity, so it is the highest illustration of the human nature. This is a temper of soul that has a necessary relation to the Christian name, and assimilates us to the nature of him, who is infinitely diffusive in his expressions of good-will towards man.

LOVE

DEDICATION.

LOVE is the completion of the law, the commencement, progress, and consummation of Christianity. It is the most ennobling quality in present life, and the truest preparative for heaven, the native region of love, where that you may have your final station is the true desire of,

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

Cha. Owen.

BOOKS published by the same
AUTHOR.

- I. **T**HE Life and Death of the late Reverend Mr. *James Owen*.
- II. Plain Dealing, or Separation without Schism. Twelfth Edition.
- III. The Vindication of it.
- IV. The *Jure Divino* Woe.
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- XI. *Donatus Redivivus*.
- XII. The *Amazon* disarmed.
- XIII. The Interest of *Great Britain*, or a rational Expedient for paying the National Debts.

T O T H E
R E A D E R.

WHEN Religion comes into disregard and contempt, those who stand up in defence of its sacred interests, entitle themselves to a double honour; this is a tribute due to the name of that Gentlewoman who occasion'd the publication of these sermons, the end of which is to produce in men grateful sentiments of Divine Goodness.

None was more sensible of her obligations to infinite bounty, nor more grieved at the failure of acknowledgment in others, grieved that so many streams of love should daily issue from God, and no altars of praise erected to his name; therefore that she might express her own dutiful regards, and animate the piety of others, she, at her own expence, set up a Lecture to be preached every New Years Day, that being as she thought a proper season to recognize Almighty Goodness in the annual flow of blessings.

SHE left behind her a paper of observations which she had made in her progress

TO the READER.

gress thro' life, but not being universally legible, I can only recover a few scatter'd hints which import her sentiments about the vanity of man, the impropriety of pride in a sinner, the lamentable neglect of practical religion, the sad account men were to make for not honouring God with their Substance, &c.

AS to these discourses they must speak for themselves; I would only observe that she chose the texts, that they were preached to a country audience, and therefore must make their appearance in a suitable dress: Very little that is new can be expected upon common subjects in Divinity, that have been so largely cultivated by learned pens.

IF the following discourses tend to the higher glory of God, and a more universal improvement in Religion, it will answer the pains, and every way equal the intendment of the Author,

C. O.

Man's Duty to exalt God.

DISCOURSE I.

ON

ExoD. XV. 2.

*My Father's God, and I will
exalt him.*

C OME and see miracles of justice
and mercy! a succession of sur-
prizing scenes! scenes of strange
deliverances and desolations! *Egypt* the
seat of tyranny, and terror of *Israel*, in
ruins! *Israel*, a dispirited captive, march-
ing out of the house of bondage under
the

the banner of a victorious fugitive: On a sudden the posture of affairs changes, and the change was equally astonishing to both parties, tho' it operated after a very different manner.

Pharaoh and his *Grandeess* at the head of a puissant army, and within view of their prey, are in an instant drowned, and their floating carcasses become the easy entertainment of devouring beasts and fish. The *Jews* say the Red sea was parted into twelve parts, that there might be a path for each tribe to go thro'.

ON t'other hand, *Israel*, that dear and delightful object of Providence, whose spirit and strength was worn out by hard labour and most oppressive severity, are as suddenly eas'd of their chains, and rescued from the hands of violence, and in the text their tears and long repeated groans are turned into triumphant songs.

UPON this memorable occasion *Moses* their *Mediator*, *General*, and *Prophet*, composed a divine song, an anthem of praise, in singing of which their hearts could not but spring up with a most sensible joy.

THE

THE text is part of this *Poem*; the composure is elegant, noble and sublime, full of moving sentiments. In the words we have two things, *viz.*

I. THE *relation* in which they stood to God; 'twas federal; their deliverer was their *Father's God*, a God in covenant with 'em, whose kind regards to 'em were hereditary.

Now they are exalting God for their marvellous rescue, they observe what he had done for their forefathers; this is an equitable return, because mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us; to revive the remembrance of and thankfulness for 'em is a sacrifice with which God is well pleased.

WHEN we thank God for present mercies we should not forget those of ancient time, especially what was done to our forefathers. But that for which I am now accountable is

II. THEIR *resolution*, which is to exalt the name of their *Father's God* for their wonderful deliverance at the Red sea; from whence I observe, as the basis of the ensuing discourse, *viz.*

Man's Duty to exalt God.

That when God elevates us from a low condition, or delivers us from any distress, our duty is to exalt him by ascribing the entire glory to his Name.

No condition of life exempts from this duty, but there are some circumstances that may challenge a return of more particular acknowledgment. The nature and reasonableness of which duty are now to be illustrated and improved.

1. How must we exalt God?

Nor by adding any thing to the intrinsic excellency of the divine unoriginated nature, for he who is infinite and independent can receive no addition of happiness or honour.

He is so holy, so good, so just, so powerful, that he cannot be more so; holiness, justice, goodness, power, being the necessary, essential, underived perfections and glories of him who is the first and supreme original of things.

BEFORE the existence of any created being he was infinitely happy, therefore when he created a world for the entertainment of *angels* and *men*, 'twas not because he wanted their attendance and adoration,

Man's Duty to exalt God.

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ration, but to display the glory of his eternal perfections, and make 'em happy by communicating to them a *taste* of his *own happiness*.

How then must we exalt him?

(1.) *By ascribing to him the glory of his nature and works:* Tho' he acquires no benefit by our most exact and exalted service, yet 'tis our duty to recognize the glory of the divine attributes, always entertaining and expressing the most awful, magnificent, and high thoughts of him who is higher than the highest. *Give to the Lord the glory due to his Name: Thou art my God and I'll exalt thee, Psalm xxix.*

2. *Psalm cxviii. 28.*

WHEN you have the most elevated ideas of God, conceive yet higher and higher of him who is infinitely above the conception of angels that excel in knowledge. He were not God if even the highest creatures could perfectly conceive and comprehend him.

THE power of religion consists very much in admiring and adoring thoughts of him who is God of the universe; his perfections (so conspicuous in his works

of nature, providence and grace) will furnish us with an inexhaustible fund of materials for such meditations.

HIS works are manifestations of the Divine Nature; in these appear the kind regards of God to man; no day but they visit us with refreshing influences; no day therefore but his altar should flame with sacrifices of praise and acknowledgment.

THIS is a tribute due to the supreme Author and Conservator of our being, and oh! how astonishing the condescension of God in accepting a tribute, and construing the *praise* of a *worm* to be an *exaltation* of his great name.

(2.) *We exalt God when we recommend him to the esteem of others, by a becoming conduct in the various scenes of life.*

THIS is the great ambition and study of real Christians, nothing lying so near their heart as the honour of God, at which they aim as their duty, when they are propagating their own interest. Thus *Solomon* in his letter to the King of *Tyre* about building the *temple* takes that opportunity of possessing that *Prince* with the

the most high and honourable sentiments of the God of *Israel*. 2 *Chron.* ii.

It would give unspeakable pleasure to a good man to see all men as easy under the government of God as himself: If therefore you desire the reformation of your neighbours, you must shine in your several orbs as the children of light, that others seeing your good works may be invited to glorify your heavenly Father.

OH! let your life be worthy of imitation! and then may you hope it will work in others a secret tendency to imitate your virtues: 'tis the outside that strikes the human eye, and indeed is almost the only thing followed, therefore do every thing with a view to render religion beautiful and illustrious, exemplifying God in every part of life.

EXAMPLES have in 'em an energetick attractive power, therefore study to excel others, that you may be more instrumental to gain upon others by the lustre of a superior light.

IN the creation, no creatures so minute and mean but they exalt God in their respective situations; nor any man,

however low and mean his sphere may be in which he moves, but by the influence of a holy life he may be the happy means of recommending religion to his neighbours.

I have read of a pious mechanick, who as I remember was a weaver, of whom it was said, *that Christ walkt as it were alive upon the earth in that man, by whose example a world of good was done.* Bonifacius, p. 41. We are not only to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, but by overt and open acts in the eyes of others. Sir *Th. Moor* being at his devotion, when the King sent for him, answer'd, *That when he had done with God he would wait upon his Majesty.* The same answer the learned and pious *Archbishop Usher* is said to return to King *Charles* on the like occasion.

CHRISTIANS are stiled *the light of the world*, i. e. *they ought to be so*: They are stars in the firmament of the church, and as such their duty is to diffuse beams of light to those around 'em, having the honour of God before their eyes, without any sinister or indirect views.

IF you would render religion beneficial to yourselves, and amiable in the sight of others, you must act from nobler motives than human applause or any worldly regards. The Christian's life should be as a convoy and safe-conduct to those about him, treading before 'em the steps they are to take towards heaven; still remembering we are accountable to him who is witness and judge of all our actions for those who are misled by the force of our ill example.

THE progress of primitive Christianity was very much owing to the exemplary lives of Christians, who by renouncing the *pomps and vanities of this world* and sinful lusts of the flesh, openly declared, that they esteemed the *earth* as a *foreign land*, and looked upon *heaven* as their *proper home*.

THE ecclesiastick Historian speaks of *Thaddæus*, one of the 70 Disciples, who being offered a great reward for his ministerial labours in *Edessa* (the then metropolis of *Mesopotamia*, of which *Agbarus* who 'tis said wrote a letter to our Saviour was sovereign) refused it with

disdain, saying, *Why should we receive worldly riches from others, since we ourselves have freely forsaken our own?* εἰ τὰ ἡμέτερα—*Euseb. Val. Ed. lib. 1. c. 13.*

So remarkable were those first Christians for real and undissembled integrity, that for a Christian to be put to his oath was accounted a disparagement to his character.

IN all transactions between man and man their rule was *to deal with others as they would be dealt with themselves*, taking no advantage of any man's ignorance. St. *Austin* gives an instance of this in one, who having a book offer'd him to be sold (by a person that understood not the price of it) at a very small rate, took the book, but gave him the full price according to its just value, which was a great deal more than the seller asked for it. The lesson hereby recommended is, not to invade other mens rights and properties knowingly: Ignorance in others is no argument for injustice in us.

No persons more prompt to offices of humanity and brotherly love, for this they
 2 became

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HI

became notorious to a proverb. See, said the admiring Heathen, *how these Christians love one another.*

NONE more exemplary in their regards to miserable objects. The bounty of those times incredible! They looked upon the poor as the treasure of the church: By these, as by bills of exchange, they returned their estates into heaven.

BUT in nothing did their charity shine more than in their compassion to the souls of others: With what fervency did they address the throne for their salvation!

THE zeal of the beloved Apostle in this instance is illustrated by *Eusebius*, on account of a young convert, who after he had turned *debauchee*, listed himself among robbers. With some difficulty the Apostle found him out, and thus accosts him, viz. *Why, O my son, dost thou run from thy aged and unarmed father? have pity upon me, my son, and be not afraid, for there is yet hope of salvation. I'll undertake with Christ for thee. I'll give my life a ransom for thine.*

2. *Why should we exalt God?*

(1.) *It's a debt we owe to the infinite excellencies of his nature.* As all perfections centre in God, so they require the first place in our acknowledgments: Say therefore, *There is none like to thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy Name is great in might,* Jer. x. 6, 7.

HE who is most High, and the highest Good, is justly entitled to our very best regards. In all his perfections he is the object of honour, and when he inherits our most exalted praises he is still short of his due.

HE is greater than the greatest. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?* Jer. x. 7. Heaven is the seat of his empire, angels of light his ministers of state, angels of darkness the executioners of justice, the earth the footstool of his throne; thus he is King of worlds. The *princes* as well as the *peasants* of the earth are his vassals: He is the source of all honour and dominion: All other government flows from him, and is a branch of his uncreated authority and power, a power derived from no power.

WHAT reason then have we to say, *Thine, O Lord, is the glory, the greatness, the dominion, the majesty.* How should we revere, and tremble at the thought of so tremendous a Majesty! Study and cultivate suitable apprehensions of so great and awful a Being, God who is a self-existent Being, a Being without beginning, *Pf. cxlv. 3.*

(2.) *God will be exalted whether we will or no.*

It is an eternal resolve, he'll be no loser by his creatures. *Be still, and know that I am God, I will be exalted in the earth, Pf. xlv. 10.* Let men do what they will, he will maintain his authority and the honor of his government; even the powers of darkness bow before his almighty sceptre.

THIS is the season of his patience, and if he has not the glory of his grace now, he will have the glory of his vindictive perfections in the day of wrath *here and hereafter.*

IN this life nothing but sin is or can be the object of his aversion and abhorrence; not to punish it would be a kind of
of

of approbation : In the common calamities of life you may read as well as feel his displeasure against sinners, which has its foundation in the holy and righteous nature of God.

Nebuchadnezzar, the great King of *Babylon*, for his monstrous pride was driven from the society of men into the open fields, where with beasts he fed upon grass for *seven years*, *Dan. iv. 33.* *Herod* the proud, for assuming to himself the honour due to the divine Majesty, made an *ignominious* exit : *Angels* and *worms* conspire to dispatch the arrogant vain man, and cloath his admirers with confusion and shame, *Acts xii. 23.*

MR. Fox relates of one who fell out of the pulpit, and immediately expired, while he was burlesquing that Scripture, *1 John i. 10. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

But the worst is yet behind. Miseries this side the grave bear no proportion to those beyond it. What is a burning fever to unquenchable fire? What is the racking pain of the stone to the furious reflections

reflections of an accusing conscience
Pain on earth, a kind of pleasure compared with infernal horror and anguish, the perpetuity of which adds inconceivable weight to their burthen.

As holiness is necessary to God, so it necessarily obliges him to hate and punish what is opposite to his pure nature; sin is so in every degree and in all its forms: What are reprobates, those fire-brands of darkness, but passive monuments of his holy, righteous, and sin-hating nature? The attributes of justice and holiness, that now suffer under a cloud, will shine with eternal brightness in that dark and sulphureous region.

Does God lengthen the tranquillity of his enemies? alas! alas! what is their longest life but a short-liv'd reprieve? are they spared? God only adjourns the court a few days, and oh! how dreadful and shocking the thought, that while they are filling up the measure of their sins, the vials of wrath are filling up for them. *Psalms xxxvii.*

(3.) *God has highly exalted us.*

To

To exalt him is pious gratitude : 'Tis a pious and pleasing imitation of him who has exalted us as *creatures*, as *men*, as *Christians*.

As *creatures* he raised us out of nothing ; as *men* he exalts us above all our fellow-creatures on earth. In mere animals the appearances of the Creator's goodness are conspicuous, but in the nature of mankind are measures of it in a much higher degree : We are elevated to a more sublime station, and invested with prerogatives whereby we resemble angels. *Psal. viii. 4. 7.*

HEAVEN and *earth* meet in *man* ; the body a structure of animated earth ; in his soul he is a-kin to angels, the most honourable tribe of beings.

SIN reflects dishonour upon God, yet God puts honour even upon sinful man ; this man is still lord of the inferior creation ; the inhabitants of the sea, the earth, and the air are his subjects and servants, and all those invested with qualities proper and convenient for his support and service.

O Lord what is *man* that thou art mindful
ful

ful of him! Hast thou made all things for the pleasurable entertainment of men, and shall not the children of men exalt the name of their great Benefactor? Has the God of heaven made us lords of the earth, and shall not we exalt his name who cloaths us with such marks of honour?

As *Christians* he has raised us above *Heathens* who are our fellow mortals. Darkness covers the greatest part of the earth; how is it our lines are fallen in a valley of vision? Our lot might have been among the abandon'd part of mankind, remote from the land of divine Oracles, the land to which pertains the *adoption*, the *glory*, the *covenant*, the *law and promises*, that are exceeding great and precious. *Rom. ix. 4.*

How great our advantage beyond the unchristianiz'd nations! They ardently desire happiness, but pursue it in the dark, while we in our pursuit of it are conducted by a superior beam of light: they feel the sad effects of sin, but know not how to appease an offended Deity, or procure a writ of ease under their fearful apprehensions.

ARE we more worthy than they, that the Sun of Righteousness should shine upon our tabernacles, and not upon theirs? by no means: if these brighter discoveries be not duly improv'd, the neglect will involve us in thicker darkness: And oh! how sad to lodge in utter darkness after we have lived so many years in a land of light!

4. *God will further exalt those that exalt him.* No man who honours God shall be a loser by his service. So he tells us, *viz. Them that honour me, I will honour.* 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. Honour and religion are inseparable.

IN serving him we serve ourselves: Religion that gives honour to God, puts the highest honour upon the religious man. We make ourselves honourable by a sincere endeavour to render God so: Glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good. *Rom.* ii. 10.

IN heaven are degrees of glory; all shine like stars, but those who honour God most on earth, will, like the sun, shine with brighter rays in the firmament of glory.

TRUE,

TRUE, we are sometimes called to lower, and abase ourselves in exalting God; but then we should consider, that even to be *dishonoured* for God is our *real honour*: The *Apostles*, when stript and dishonour'd, by being scourged as malefactors for preaching, were so far from being ashamed of Christ, that they rejoiced they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name, or that *they were honour'd to be dishonoured for him*. So the original κατηξιώθησαν ἀτιμασθῆναι, *Act. v. 41*. The two words are of contrary signification, and illustrated by an elegant *Oxymoron*. To be *scourged* was counted a most disgraceful punishment among the *Jews* and *Romans*.

OUR glory in the upper world will be proportioned to our service and sufferings here for the truth. Are there mansions of glory? The highest seats there are prepared for the noble army of *Martyrs*; and for *Confessors* who persevere in the faith, under all the hardships of reproaches and persecution: Thus are we taught by our great Pattern, who for *the joy that was set before him* [as the reward

ward of his sufferings] *endured the cross, and despised the shame.* Heb. xii. 2. The reproach of this cross vanished before the lustre of the crown which was placed in his view to support him under the weight.

III. Application in two things.

1. *Reflect with sorrow upon your past life, that God has been no more exalted by your conduct.*

ANOTHER year is spent and gone, and can you review the various actions of it, and not tremble to think how little you have done for the honour of God, and how much against it ! God remember'd you in the several blessings of last year, but have not you forgot the bountiful Donor ? Did not you make his benefits his rivals ? Did not you abuse them to pride, luxury, and security, and thereby made prosperity, which is the most comfortable part of life, the most unhappy part of it. What pity that the smiles of heaven should hurt the children of the earth, and that sun-shine should lead men to darkness.

2. *Resolve to exalt him more this year.*

ARE you spar'd that you may renew and repeat your provocations ? No, but
that

that you may bring forth better and more abundant fruit.

EXALT him more in your *hearts, families and lives.*

SET him on the throne of your *hearts*, he desires and deserves it. *Prov. xxiii. 26. My son give me thy heart, i. e. give thy understanding to God, to be guided by his wisdom, thy will to be govern'd by his precepts. Let thy affections terminate on him who alone is worthy of them. Give him thy conscience, to whom the empire of it belongs, and who only can purify and pacify it. Thus you are to prepare a habitation for the most High in your hearts, making them the tabernacles of his glory.*

RENDER God more honourable in your *houses*; furnish these with an altar and a throne for him who builds up families. Have you not family-mercies to be thankful for? Have you not family-sins to confess and repent of? Have you not children and servants that claim your best instructions? Would you have God prosper your domestick affairs? then set up family-religion.

OBJECTION.

OBJECTION. *Many prosper without prayer.*

I answer, That if success in your affairs be not the fruit of prayer, it may be success without a blessing: If men grow rich, and if, in the pursuit, religion be left out, what is so got, is with a curse; and a little with the divine blessing is preferable to an overgrown estate without it.

IN every family there should be a church. Col. iv. 15. *Salute Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.* He had a religious family, in which probably his pious neighbours met for divine instruction and worship. Yea, in the early ages of the world, the church was canton'd among families; and 'tis observable, that where the *Patriarchs* fixt their tents, they erected a *devotional altar* in honour of the *Lord Jehovah*; teaching us to make our houses christian families and nurseries for heaven, the church of the first-born.

IN all the scenes and turns of life imitate your great original; in living to God, you live like him: for holiness is a likeness to him, who is the fountain of all purity.

No

No other object worthy of our high esteem and imitation: There's no act of devotion by which we honour him more, than by an exact imitation of his virtues. 1 Pet. ii. 9. *That you should shew forth the praises* [Gr. virtues] *of him who hath called you --- ἀρετάς.* This word, *virtues*, is not attributed to God in the moral and vulgar signification of it, but when applied to him it answers to the Hebrew word which signifies *sanctity*, i. e. be like God in purity. *Habak. iii. 3. His glory* (Gr. his virtue) *covered the heavens.* ἡ ἀρετή. The heavens are covered with the splendor of his glory. *Chald. Paraph. My praise I'll not give to graven images.* Esay xlii. 8. lxx. *My virtues*, τὰς ἀρετάς. Ver. 12. *Declare his praise* (Gr. his virtues) *in the Islands.* Esay xliii. 21. *They shall shew forth my praise*, ἀρετὰς, i. e. *his virtues.* 'Tis only in his moral perfections that we, in any degree, are capable of imitating him in his virtues; breathe therefore after a resemblance to those great originals. A Heathen could say, *God is angry with those who imitate his*

his thunder and lightning, but delights in those who imitate him in his virtues.

A creature never makes so great and glorious a figure, as when he represents God by universal purity: To be holy is to reflect a lustre on the divine Majesty. To excite you to these duties, consider

1. *God gives life for this very end, viz. exaltation of his Name.*

HE who is the first cause of all created things, is the ultimate end of them, for his sovereign pleasure they are made, and are upheld in being. *Prov. xvi. 4. The Lord made all things for himself, i. e. with a view to the glory of his own perfections.*

AND what more reasonable, than that we should consecrate our lives to his honour, by whom we live; especially if we consider man is the immediate end of this lower creation, and so furnished with intellectual powers, as to be able not only to govern inferior creatures, but to be as it were their substitute and mouth of praise to God, their Creator and Preserver.

2. *God is exalted by inferiour creatures.*

ALL those according to their situations and capacities answer the various ends of their

Man's Duty to exalt God.

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their existence, and never deviate from the first law impress'd on their nature in creation. They never falter or fail in their obedience, and why should we?

EVEN mute creatures have a mouth to praise their God, and in their respective stations they shew forth his glory.

BIRDS sing hymns of praise to their Maker; they drink and look up as it were with an eye of acknowledgment. The elements of fire, water, air, and earth, exactly observe the will of God in their creation, and never swerve from the rule of nature without the express command of the Almighty Creator.

SUN Moon and Stars keep in their several orbits, and ranks, and constantly march according to their first order, unless countermanded by the supreme Director. Beasts answer the end of their being, and serve the particular purposes of Providence without demur or dispute. *Esay xliii. 20. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons, and the owls, because I give waters in the wilderness, that nothing but a natural incapacity can make em still and silent, that is; as to praise.*

C

SHALL

SHALL every creature exalt God, and man be excepted? Must man alone sit rent free, and pay no homage to the crown of heaven under which he holds his all in vassalage? Shall the creatures in the visible world be exact and constant in their obedience, and not man the glory of it? Man who is their constituted head, and enriched with a stock of nobler prerogatives? Oh! how mortifying will it be in the great Day to have these creatures summon'd as witnesses against us, and our disobedience to God confronted, and condemned by their obedience and dutiful regards to God, and to man his vicegerent?

3. *We are God's beneficiaries.*

BEINGS dependant upon his power and benevolence, and that every moment of life. The supports of man's life are his property, who created and conducts all Things. *Levit. xxv. 23. The land is mine, for you are strangers with me, or husbandmen according to the Chaldee Paraphrase.* Now among the Romans the inroll'd husbandmen had nothing of their own, but all belonged to their masters.

God,

God, who says, *the land is mine*, has an equal right to say, *your money is mine*, *your houses are mine*, yea all your comforts are mine, *i. e.* they are instances of my unmerited beneficence and good will.

Is not the earth crown'd with the riches of his goodness, to gratify our desires, who are the principal inhabitants of it? What variety of delightful creatures are provided for our entertainment? The earth is an emporium, or general market, where all things necessary for the support of nature are to be found. The air is an inclosure in which all kinds of birds and fowls are kept for our use. Seas and rivers furnish us with innumerable shoals of fish, &c.

Does he not every day shine upon us with fresh beams of goodness, filling our hearts with *food* and *gladness*? *Act. xiv. 17.*

Is not he the Strength of our life, and the life of all our comforts? Is it not he that makes creatures that are under a divine curse for our sins to be blessings to us? Who is it that continues the health of our body, and vigour of our mind but he who

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form'd both? Is it not he that preserves our persons from dangers? Our houses from flames? Our life from death?

AND what returns have we made? What revenues of glory have we brought into his treasury? It should be always remembered, that man is accountable to God for mercies, as well as for sins, and if he would not have his mercies witness against him another day, he must now make them instruments of his glory.

IN the discharge of this great duty, take these two cautions.

1. *In exalting God see you don't do it from self-exalting principles.*

SUCH is the nature of carnal self that it insinuates into our most sacred and solemn actions; even in divine worship there may be selfish and sinister views. How many attend the sanctuary not so much to do the will of God, as to gratify their own sensual will, either to see or be seen, to please those they depend upon, or to procure the good opinion of their neighbours?

NOTHING more provoking to him who commands us to reverence his sanctuary,

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tuary, than to see men prevaricate in the presence of his awful Majesty, and under the covert of devotion, profane the holy name they pretend to exalt: Thus men ruin themselves by misplacing *self*, i. e. setting it above God and heaven, and by being more solicitous for their welfare as a *body* than as a *soul*.

IN acts of benevolence to the poor, how many propose to themselves the applause of the multitude; more than the honour and approbation of God? Thus the *Pharisees* were large and liberal in their distributions to distressed objects, but it was *to be seen of men*, i. e. to gain a place in their esteem, and therefore sounded a trumpet with fond and proud affectation of making their charitable deeds publickly known. *Mat. vi. 1, 2.*

SIN and carnal *self* are terms reciprocal, to live to *sin*, and to live to *self*, is the very same in the scripture Dialect, *2 Cor. v. 15. that they should not live unto themselves*, i. e. not make themselves but Christ the great end of life.

THEN man fell out with God, when he fell in love with himself; since which all

seek their own. Phil. ii. 21. i. e. their own will and way. Few stretch their thoughts beyond the narrow bounds of self. Psal. x. 4. God is not in all his thoughts, i. e. as the Spectator and Judge of all his actions.

IN religion, we are allowed to regard our interest, and aim at the *Recompence of reward*; but there is such a thing as a *sinful noxious self-interest*, i. e. when we make ourselves the principal end of our religious actions.

THE *Jews* offerings in the wilderness for forty years, God esteemed 'em as not offered to himself, because intended only for their own safety, without any regard to God. *Amos v. 25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, oh house of Israel? According to the original, Did ye make or cause your sacrifices to approach me, or come near to me in the wilderness?*

THUS we see man may worship God, and not approach him who is the object of worship. Their circumstances in the wilderness obliged them to intermit sacrificing; God dispensed with that, therefore

fore he does not blame them for the intermission of the duty, but for their failure in it when done, that is, their not regarding his honour therein.

Did ye fast unto me? says God to the children of the captivity. *Zach. vii. 5.* They had their days of fasting and prayer in *Babylon*, where their tears were mingled with their daily food; but while they were in this mournful posture, the thoughts of *Sion* and of their banishment were the great subjects of their mournful attention. No genuine remorse for their sins that brought 'em thither, nor concern for the honour of God, who for their sins sold 'em to *Babylon*, that they might there learn the worth of mercies by the want of them.

MEN may worship God, *viz.* in external acts, and in them make self the secret end of worship; upon this account he stiles their worship *flattery*, a religious grimace, *Psalms lxxviii. 36.* *They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.* They harangued him with fair words, promising what they never intended to perform.

They lied with their lips because their hearts were not right before God.

2. *In exalting God see you be more concerned for the honour of God than for your own reputation.*

LET nothing that touches your own character so sensibly affect you as what touches the honour of God. Let his glory be dear to you above all things, how near and dear soever they be.

WHAT a storm does an attack upon our good name raise? What tumultuous and strange emotions in the mind? but injuries done to God give us little or no disturbance, and tho' repeated, produce no just and true remorse nor resentment.

IMPETUOUS and violent passions transform us into *sons of thunder* in our own cause, but in the cause of God we are transfigured into *Gallio's*. Don't we stand mute and unconcerned when men prophane his sacred name, when they turn his grace into wantonness, mercies into instruments of sin, religion into a subject of scoffs, ridicule and hatred?

ON the other hand, nothing lies so near the heart of a good and pious soul

as

as the honour of his Father who is in the *heavens*; what a transport of grief and indignation had *Moses* the meek and mild, when he saw the honour of God assaulted by an idol in the camp? In his wrath against that sin he broke the *Tables of the Law*, tho' writ with God's own hand, *Exod.* xxxii. 19.

WHO more reproached than *Christ* the Lord of glory? His sinless life an invariable scene of sufferings. Dishonour and disgrace, calumny and contempt attended him in all his motions, yet the wrongs offered to his heavenly Father gave him a more painful sensation than when his own honour was laid in the dust.

WHERE love to God is predominant, a due regard to the divine honour is never wanting: So powerful a passion is love, that all the inclinations of the soul are determined by it. Divine love, says one, does in a manner give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his nature.

WHEN the *Lycaonians* offered to sacrifice to *Paul* and *Barnabas*, under the notion of Gods come down in the like-

ness of men, the two Apostles entertain'd the motion with the utmost indignation, rent their cloaths, ran among the people, and cried out, *Sirs, why do ye these things?* as being more concerned for the honour of God than their own reputation.

To conclude,

DAILY consider the end of your being: The various steps men take to ruin their souls may easily be traced unto that mischievous and cursed spring, *viz.* inconsideration. *Adam's* first sin was a non-attention to what God said when Satan argued with him: Why has God made us? to serve him, and save our immortal souls; and whatever we do that does not conduce to this valuable end is undoing ourselves.

Now therefore, since this is the principal end of man, *desire* nothing, *do* nothing, but what may contribute towards the attainment of this great end, *viz.* the *exaltation of God, and salvation of thy soul.*

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DISCOURSE II.

PSAL. XXXIV. 3.

*Oh magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his Name to-
gether.*

HAVING in the precedent discourse evinc'd it to be man's duty to extol God in the conduct of life, I come now to consider it under the idea of social duty, as managed in concurrence with others ; *Let us exalt his Name together.*

THE Psalmist here invites his neighbouring devotionists to join with him in acknowledging the goodness of God who had honoured him with some eminent deliverance, for which doubtless he had made grateful returns before, but that would not satisfy so pious a man as Da-
vid,

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vid, without summoning in the assistance of others. Here note,

'Tis a duty to magnify and exalt the Name of God together i. e. in social worship.

IN the discussion of this article I shall briefly state the case about places of worship, shew the pre-eminence of publick above private worship, and then make proper reflexions.

1. State the case about places of worship.

THE origin of architecture, (or the time when they first begun to build dwelling houses) is uncertain; if there had been no sin, there would have been no need of any such structures at all, no more than of cloathing.

'Tis sin that made garments and houses necessary to guard against the inclemency of the air, which otherwise would have been always incorrupt, pure and salubrious. While our first parents were cloathed with the divine Image, 'twas not only an ornament, but an armour of proof against all incidents whatever.

ON the other hand, we are certain that

that divine worship was celebrated in the world long before there were any publick buildings erected for social devotion. To illustrate this, I observe more particularly,

1. That it does not appear to us, *there were any material churches, or religious structures for publick worship before the deluge, nor a long while after.*

I find no visible regular society, wherein several adjacent families met with their minister for publick worship, and administration of sacraments, for above two thousand years after the creation.

EV'RY family then, and long after, was a particular church, not dependant upon any superior power or accountable to it. The head of the family was the priest who presided in domestick worship, and manag'd the whole of the sacred solemnities. Where-ever the Patriarchs pitcht their tents they erected a religious altar, where they sacrificed and adored; but it does not appear that their neighbours did combine and unite with them in solemnizing divine worship, but every family apart.

2. *The*

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2. *The first religious assemblies met in open fields, mountains, hills and groves.*

IT was a considerable time after the deluge before any temples were erected for divine worship, and till such places were built, *all nations performed* their worship in the open air; those of the church as well as strangers and foreigners. Thus *Noah* as soon as he came out of the ark offered up sacrifice in the open field.

THUS *Abraham* erected an altar of acknowledgment in the plain of *Mamre*; *Gen. xxiii.* By a divine command he prepares a sacrifice, with which he repaired to mount *Moria*, where he offered up *Isaac* in a figure. *Gen. xxii.* *Jacob* having accommodated matters with *Laban* sacrificed upon the mount, where he offered a sacrifice of peace-offerings: So that they were not idolaters who first chose mountains and high situations for places of worship.

GROVES sacred to worship, are, as I take it, first mentioned in *Exod. xxxiv. 13.* *Ye shall, says God, destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.* The reason was because they

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were abused to idolatry : Tho' some think *Abraham's grove* in *Beersheba* might be an oratory, or house of prayer.

WHEN they erected an altar on a hill, 'twas planted around with trees, if none grew there before, which perhaps has given birth to the custom of planting church-yards with trees in many places.

WE read of a consecrated grove in *Israel*, that was demolished by *Gideon*. *Judg.* vi. 25. 26. These groves that were dedicated to the honour of their Gods, were the first temples of the Gods, and these were look'd upon as sacred apartments, and so necessary, that they planted groves in midst of their cities*.

THE high places are first mentioned. *Levit.* xxvi. 30. I will *destroy your high places*, because they were become the seats of superstition and idolatry. Did not *Samuel* sacrifice in the *high-place*? Yes ; but that was by a divine order. *1 Sam.* ix. 12. *1 Sam.* vii. 17. tho' indeed the practice

* *Lucus in urbe fuit media, lætissimus umbra.*
Virg. *Æneid.* lib. iv. 445.

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practice of sacrificing in groves and high-places was long before Gideon and Sammel's time.

IN such mighty veneration were these groves and high-places that they were much frequented even after the erection of temples. In process of time, places of worship were wall'd about, but open to the sky.

Why did they affect to worship in high and open places? That they might have a clear view of the heavens, and be more conspicuous to the Gods. Temples dedicated to the tutelar Gods of towns were built on heights, the better to defend them on all sides.

But why was the place surrounded with trees? Because in their apprehension darkness did best suit with the mysteries of religion, as it had an aptitude in it, to inspire men with a sacred horror.

OTHERS covered their religious structures to guard them against the rigour of the weather, which often disturb'd them in their devotion.

3. *The tabernacle which was a portable chapel, was the first building erected for the*

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the honour of the true God. Exod. xxv.

8, 9, 10.

WHEN he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Wilderness, he manifested himself to them in a very peculiar manner, cloathing himself with a light, whereby he became visible to the camp: while they dwelt in tents, God would have a tent or tabernacle to sojourn with 'em, which was the place of the *Shechina*, the habitation of divinity, a type of Christ dwelling in the human nature, Christ who was and is the true *Shechina*, the glory of the Lord.

BEFORE the tabernacle was set up at *Shilo*, the high places were lawful, 'twas permitted to offer sacrifices elsewhere, and the service was done by the first-born. After the tabernacle was erected, high places were prohibited, and the service was performed by the Priesthood. *Light-foot* v. 1.

THO' sacrifices were offered at the door of the tabernacle, yet it was not intended to be a place to meet in for divine worship, being only a tent, and not capacious enough to hold an assembly; it
had

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had no windows, nor any light but from the lamps; it was not a fixt, but a portable house, which they mov'd from one place to another; there oracles, and divine counsels were delivered and sacrifices were offered.

THIS tabernacle was divided into two parts. In the first was *the candlestick*, for perpetual light, for the lamps thereof were always burning. Then the *table* and *shewbread upon it*, viz. twelve loaves for the twelve tribes of *Israel*, these were presented to God, and as it were, set before him, therefore called in the original *Bread of Faces*. On the sabbath four priests went in, to fetch away the loaves that had stood all the week, and four others went in and set on the twelve new loaves. In God's house is plenty of provision.

THE furniture in the inner part was the *golden censer* which was to hold the *incense*, or that sacred perfume offered to God. The *Ark* which was a little chest, wherein was preserved a collection of divine rarities, viz. *The golden Pot of Manna* that continued pure and sweet from

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from putrefaction ever since the time it was first gathered in the wilderness. In this *Ark* also was *Aaron's Rod* that wrought such wonders in *Egypt*, and blossomed in *Israel*, and yielded ripe almonds in one night, by which the priesthood was confirm'd to *Aaron*. *Numb.* xvii. 5, 8. *The Tables of covenant* was another part of its furniture, by which we are to understand, those two stone-tables on which God had written the ten commandments, or laws of the covenant on mount *Sinai*. This *Ark* was a resemblance of our Saviour, in whom God dwells among men, therefore called *the strength* (or power) of *Jehovah*, and his face or presence. *Psal.* cv. 4.

4. *The next publick structure for worship, was Solomon's Temple.*

TILL then the *Jews* had no fixt place of worship, which was about 480 years after their coming out of *Egypt*. So long the church of God subsisted in the world without any fixt house or place of publick devotion, being the best part of three thousand years at least. *1 Kings* vi. 1.

Josephus says it was 560 years after their

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their departure out of *Egypt* that the temple was built; so does *Theophilus ad Antolicum*, p. 253. *Oxon.* 1684.

CONCERNING the temple, I observe, I. *It was the centre of unity*, but not designed to be the place of common worship for all the congregation of *Israel*, it not being large enough to contain one tribe out of twelve.

THE people of *Israel* were divided into twenty four classes, each of these ranks was appointed to attend upon the divine service on the solemn feasts, as representatives of the whole nation, because all the people could not possibly be assembled in the court of the temple, nor be present at those sacrifices that were offered daily on their behalf.

THOSE who thus represented the kingdom were called *stationary* men, because they were obliged to attend the continual daily sacrifice, (which was provided at the publick charge out of the temple-treasury) at which it was impossible for all *Israel* to be present.

ON the other hand, a man's sacrifice for himself could not be offered up unless

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he himself were present, and put his hand on its head. *Levit. i. 3. Lev. iii. 2.*

2. *The temple was erected for a place of sacrifice,* where the various parts of ceremonial worship were performed and confined. It was a kind of a national parish in which the nation of the Jews met three times a year by their representatives, at the three solemn feasts, *viz.* the *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and *Tabernacles*. Then every male was obliged to appear before the Lord at the temple, *viz.* at the *Passover*, which was kept in remembrance of their deliverance out of *Egypt*; at the feast of *Pentecost*, which was celebrated 50 days after *Easter* in memory of giving the Law upon mount *Sinai*, 50 days after their departure out of *Egypt*; the third feast was that of *Tabernacles*, in remembrance of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, and of the goodness of God in giving them a good harvest.

THE reason perhaps was this; the temple being God's habitation, provision was made for it by sacrifices, these sacrifices were partly consumed by fire, and partly eaten

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eaten by the Priests who were members of God's family, therefore to be maintained at his expence: What was consumed on the altar was counted God's share or portion, hence the altar was called *God's table*, and the sacrifice upon it *God's meat*; because God did after a spiritual manner feast with his people upon the sacrifices, as an instance of their harmony and friendship, *Malach. i. 12.*

IN the wilderness the *Israelites* eat no meat at their own table, but what they had first sacrificed to God at the door of the tabernacle, where the blood and fat were offered to God upon the altar, and the flesh eaten as a peace-offering, *Levit. xvii. 4, 5, 6.*

OTHERS think this command forbids only the killing of beasts for sacrifice any where but at God's altar; but be that as it will, 'tis evident this injunction was dispensed with when the *Israelites* were fixt in *Canaan*, their houses being remote from the *tabernacle* and *temple*, *Deut. xii. 21.*

IN the wilderness there was no difficulty in the case; when the tabernacle was

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in midst of the camp, what they eat at their own table, or offered unto God, might be killed with ease at the door of that sacred building; but upon their dispersion in *Canaan* 'twas not so practicable; therefore instead of that Law, God appointed that at three set times in the year every male was to come up to *Jerusalem*, and see God in his temple, and eat and drink in his presence; upon which account the sacrifice then offered was called *the sacrifice of seeing* מרא

THE *Israelites* being settled in the promised land, God turns the tabernacle, which was an ambulatory house, into a standing temple; in imitation of which the Heathens built temples to be a residence for their idol Deities.

God dwelt in the temple as his mansion-house on earth, and (to compleat the idea of a house) there was a table with dishes, spoons, bowls, candlestick with its lamps continually burning; to which the Prophet seems to allude when he says, God had his *fire in Sion*, i. e. for the defence of his domesticks, and destruction of his enemies, *Esay xxxi. 9.*
LXX. 5. *Left*

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5. Lest in those long intervals the exercises of religion might be neglected in the land, synagogues were erected over the whole kingdom, where the moral part of divine worship was celebrated.

In these houses the people conven'd for publick worship on Sabbath days, when the Priests prayed, read the Law and expounded it: These meeting houses being built for the honour of God were called *synagogues of God*, *Psalms* lxxiv. 8. of these synagogues there were no less than four hundred and eighty in *Jerusalem* when the city was destroyed by the *Roman* army.

EVEN before these the *Jews* had their oratories or houses of prayer, *1 Sam.* vii. 5. *Josh.* xi. 3. *Judg.* x. 15. *Philo Judæus* speaks of these houses the *Jews* had at *Rome* and *Alexandria*; of our Lord 'tis said, he continued all night in the prayer-house of God, *Luke* vi. 12. so the words should be read.

6. *Private houses were the first Christian churches.*

In these the publick exercises of religion were generally performed, in these

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the Gospel was preached with success for above three hundred years, 'till *Constantine's* time, who died in the 4th century, and when places were erected for publick worship, the work was slow and gradual, and it was many years after before parochial Churches arrived at their perfection.

I now proceed to the next thing proposed, *viz.* to shew

II. The pre-eminence of publick worship above private.

THE reasonableness of this proposition will appear, if we consider that as we enjoy publick mercies with others, 'tis reasonable we should make our united acknowledgments to the Author of them in a body: Our closets and houses should be so many oratories, or places of solemn devotion, but these must vail to the publick for two reasons, *viz.* because *God is more honoured by the voice of multitudes, and worshipping assemblies are entitled to the superior regards of Heaven.*

I. *God is more honoured by the adoration of a publick assembly.*

THE divine praises sound best in concert, in which the several parts of mu-

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sick meet; *Hallelujah* is the voice of *many waters*. In the elegy composed upon the fall of *Babylon*, the triumphant song begins with *Hallelujah*, *I heard a great voice of much people, saying, Alleluia, glory and honour to the Lord our God*, Rev. xix. 1, 6.

NOTICE is here taken of numbers, a sacred multitude giving glory to God: How loud and sweet the sound of their united voices! the confluence and concurrence of so many tongues could not but form the most delightful melody in the ears of God.

THE angels of glory thus adore and exalt the omnipotent name together. Publick worship on earth resembles that of heaven, where the glorious inhabitants make one harmonious assembly.

THE first act of worship we read of was that of an angelick assembly, when the foundation of our earth was laid: Then the *morning-stars*, those first-born of God, and beginning of his strength in creation, addressed him with anthems of praise, upon the appearance of a new world rising out of nothing, *Job xxxviii. 7.*

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THOSE sons of the morning, and first heralds of a deity *sung together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*, when they saw the first stone of this mighty fabrick laid; that is, when the foundation of our earth was laid, the blessed angels assembled upon that occasion, and sung a hymn of praise to the almighty Creator.

THUS at the birth of our Lord the earth rung with the united acclamations of angels; *a multitude of the heavenly host praising God with an audible voice, Luke ii. 13.* God was more honoured by the voice of that heavenly multitude than by that single angel who first published the incarnation of the Messiah.

THE universal applause of a nation reflects greater lustre on a victorious general, or the birth of a prince, than the congratulations of a few favourites.

HENCE it is, God interprets the neglect of publick worship to be a contempt of his honour. *If I be a father where is my honour? O ye priests that despise my Name.* How did they *despise his Name?* By neglecting publick ordinances, wherein his Name was wont to be magnified and adored, *Mal. i. 6.* D 2 OUR

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OUR Lord Redeemer has a daily tribute of homage now paid him by particular persons in their retirements, and a higher degree of honour from religious assemblies; but his Name and his mighty victories were never so celebrated on earth as they will be by the general and grand assembly in the last day. What honour! what harmony! what melody! when angels and saints join in the sacred concert!

IN every act of secret worship we honour God, by acknowledging our dependance upon him, but when greater numbers join in this solemn acknowledgment, the tide of glory swells higher; hereby an accumulation of honour accedes to God; the more voices the more the divine ear is ravished; in private adorations we acknowledge God, but in the sanctuary we proclaim him to the world, and loudly recommend him to the esteem of others.

2. *An adoring assembly receives more honour from God.*

THE advantage, if I may so speak, is reciprocal with regard to the adorer and the

the great object of adoration. God proportionates the returns to the receipts. The more honour he receives the richer returns he makes, and the more liberal he is in the dispensation of his honours.

THE divine presence extends to every true worshipper in his recess and privacy, but publick worship claims a more ample share therein, to which particular promises in both Testaments are made.

1. *In the Old Testament :*

IN every place where God erected memorials of his Name, he promised to grace the solemnity with his gracious presence. *In all places where I record my Name* (or cause the remembrance of it to be) *I'll come unto thee and bless thee,* i. e. in all places where publick worship is performed, they may depend upon my presence and benediction, *Exod. xx. 24.* The *Chaldee* paraphrase renders it, *In every place where I shall make my divinity or my glory dwell, I will send my blessing, and I will bless thee.*

IN the wilderness, the solemn exercises of religion were performed in the camp; but in process of time ceremonial worship

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was limited to those memorials of religion, the *tabernacle* and the *ark*, in which there was a copious display of the *Shechina* or the Divine presence.

THE *tabernacle*, that moveable oratory, with the court thereto belonging, stood in the centre of the camp surrounded with an host of *Priests and Levites*. The *Cherubims* by the junction of their wings overshadowed the mercy-seat in the *ark*, from whence God delivered his oracles and counsels.

THIS accounts for that expression, *God dwells between* (or on) *the Cherubims*, i. e. those devices representing holy angels who constantly attended the *Shechina*. There the supreme King sat on his cherubimical throne, as on a *throne of power* to give laws, and a *throne of mercy* to receive the penitent addresses and acknowledgments of transgressors. *Pf. lxxx. 1. Thou that dwellest between the Cherubims shine forth. Pf. xcix. 1. He sits between the Cherubims*, or on 'em. There he promises to meet his people, and give 'em directions for their conduct.

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HENCE it was called the tabernacle of meeting or of the congregation. There says God to Moses, *I will meet thee, and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two Cherubims*, Exod. xxv. 22. *And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with God, then he heard the voice of one speaking from off the mercy-seat — from between the two Cherubims*, Numb. vii. 89.

WHY was the land of *Judea* denominated a *valley of vision*, but because there was a visible appearance of God in the publick ordinances administer'd there?

2. In the New Testament :

FOR the encouragement of Christian assemblies, our Lord assures them of his perpetual presence. *Lo I am with you alway to the end of the world*, Mat. xxviii. 20. *i. e.* he would be with them in their sacred solemnities. The promise first concerns the Apostles, then all other ministers, and all the faithful to the end of time.

THE protection and peace of churches, the purity of ordinances, and their suc-

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cessful administration depends upon his federal presence. He is present in his Spirit, whom he sends to supply his bodily absence. He is Lord of providence, the *government* of the created globe is devolved upon him whose Name is *wonderful*, but in that vast circuit no province so much the object of his kind regards as his church.

THE same promise extends to lesser societies convened for a religious end. *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in midst of them, Mat. xviii. 20.* When they were met together, they were filled with the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 1, 4.

DID God dwell between the Cherubims in the tabernacle and temple? so does our Lord in *midst of the golden candlesticks*, as the sun is placed in the centre to influence its planets with light and heat, Rev. ii. 1.

THO' the promise of his presence is made to religious assemblies, yet 'tis not the number, but the faith, the heart, and sincerity of worshippers that invite the blessed Saviour to make one among them.

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He does not confine his special regards to those sacred conventions, but in them those who diligently seek may find him. The Gospel is the instituted means of salvation. 'Tis in this field alone the *pearl of great price* is to be found. Here the mines of grace are lodg'd! Here the waters of the sanctuary run! Here *Dagon* falls before the *ark of God*! Here the rod of *Aaron* blossoms afresh! Here *lions* are turned into *lambs*!

It is by the word that God darts beams of light into dark and benighted minds, that he breathes upon dry bones, and quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Here the wonders of grace are displayed, in perfecting the good work begun, therefore the word is said to be for *edifying the body, and perfecting the saints*, Eph. iv. 12.

HOLY ordinances are not only significations of the Divine presence, but the grand preservatives of religion. What reason then have we to set the highest estimate upon those institutions of wisdom and goodness, and not make a forfeiture of them by misimprovement? Be-

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sides, when ordinances (to which a promise of the Divine presence is annex'd) are disregarded or become insipid entertainments, no wonder if serious religion languishes and dies.

I shall only add here,

1. *That blessings have been granted in the publick worship, when denied upon private addresses made to the throne.* David when nonplust about the intricate motions of Providence, could not solve the difficulty 'till he went into the sanctuary, *Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17.*

2. *So comforts have been vouchsafed to good men in the publick assembly which they wanted in secret devotion.* Thus the church in *Canticles* addressing herself to Christ for rest and refreshment, he directs her to publick ordinances as the instituted sources of consolation, *Cant. i. 7, 8.*

III. Application.

THIS then reproves

1. *Those who upon their first entrance into a church use private devotion in the hours of publick worship.*

I mean such who entering the place of worship after service is begun fall to their
private

private prayers, which looks like giving the preference to that private duty? Tho' the pretence be devotion, yet it seems to carry with it a disrespectful aspect with relation to the publick ordinance. Our end in coming to church is to join with the assembly in the publick worship, and in so doing we maintain uniformity and concord in that worship.

THE intention may be laudable and good, but a laudable meaning can't justify an action that has in it at least an air of indecency and irregularity. The custom seems to encroach upon the Apostolick canon that recommends *decency and order* in religious worship, 1 Cor. xiv. 10.

A private prayer before publick service begins, as a preface to it, is a very commendable action; but when the assembly is actually engaged in worship, in that case we should immediately join and *exalt God together*, and not apart.

2. *This arraigns and condemns those who disregard all publick worship.*

To acknowledge a supreme being, and not pay a tribute of manifest homage and honour to him, is a provocation of a high

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nature : We may as well disown the existence of a God, as to deny him the reverence and adoration due to the dignity and greatness of his nature.

A God without worship is no God to us. Not to adore him is to disown and disclaim all relation to him. A total omission of his worship in the closet, in the family and publick, is one genuine character of an atheistical spirit ; for no people ever own'd a God, but who thought themselves obliged to give him some kind of open homage and submission.

IN the black indictment preferr'd against those who revolted from the religion of *Noah*, one article was, *that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but made idols his rivals.* Rom. i. 21.

THERE are others, who by a partial omission of publick worship, put open contempt upon it, I mean those who from ev'ry little trifling and frivolous incident, take occasion to absent 'emselfes from the house of God.

SOME plead distance from the sanctuary ; whereas in truth, 'tis the distance of the heart from it, or want of predominant

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minant affection to ordinances that keeps them at home. Love would shorten the road, and reconcile men to greater difficulties.

DIDST thou but love the institutions of God, the way to *Sion-hill* would be pleasant; thou wouldest think no pain, no cost, no labour, too much to compass the altar of God. It was from this sacred principle of love that *David* preferred the *tabernacle* before the *throne*. *Oh Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells.* Psal. xxvi. 8.

IN many places, secular affairs make slender congregations: the excuse that's judg'd sufficient for not hearing a sermon, would not hold good when invited by a promising market or fair.

OTHERS prefer the diversions of a carnal mind before the devotions of the church, chusing to loiter in the fields, to revel among their cups, to visit or idle away their time, rather than attend the solemnities of the temple. Some are slumbering away their lives in bed, when the hour of the day requires their dutiful

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ful attendance on God. Others, who pretend to have acquired a plerophory of knowledge, fondly imagine themselves to be above the instructions of the pulpit.

3. *This also gives sentence against those who prefer domestick before publick worship.*

BUT the exercises of religion performed in their own houses, will by no means atone for neglecting the publick service : such a conduct is a countermand to a divine order. To think they may spend the Lord's day with equal profit, in reading a sermon by the fire-side, is to make 'em selves wiser than God who peremptorily commands their attendance in his house.

I don't see what plea they can form for such presumption, when they consider that social or publick worship is an ordinance of God, and that a voluntary omission of it is to contradict the wisdom and will of God, who prefers *the gates of Sion* [that is publick worship] *before the dwellings of Jacob* [that is family worship.] *Psal. lxxxvii. 2.*

Under the law, a strict regard was had to publick worship ; their commentaries
on

on the law were so many publick homilies and sermons. *Neb.* viii. 5, 8. Our Lord was a preacher to the multitudes. He join'd with the *Jews* in the sacraments of circumcision and passover, tho' not in their other ceremonies, for we don't find that he offered any sacrifice but himself.

4. *This condemns those who desert the publick worship they formerly frequented.*

THIS retreat is the common inlet to apostacy. Even in the apostolick age were spiritual deserters, men whose revolt from religion begun in renouncing that article of our creed, the *communion of saints*. Against this breach of faith, the apostle cautions the *Hebrews*, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, -- not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is.* Heb. x. 23, 25.

Cain, I take to be the first sinner who deserted the house of God, viz. the religious altar of *Adam*. *He went out from the presence of the Lord*, i. e. He departed from the place of worship, his father's house, where God was wont to display the presence of his grace and goodness. *Gen.* iv. 16.

THIS

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THIS egress cannot be supposed to be a going out of God's real presence, because where-ever we are, we are in God who is every where, therefore *Cain's* departure was a recess from the *Schechina*, or the Divine glory that shined upon *Adam's family*, as it was his church. The *Hebrew* and *Greek* therefore render it, *He therefore went out from the face of God.*

HAVING impiously turned his back upon God, the object of divine worship, and his father's house, the place where 'twas celebrated, he commenced head of the unbelieving world; and ever after, the grand apostate was treated as one excommunicated from the society of the faithful.

NOR are we without those who wear this part of *Cain's mark*, persons who not only forsake worshipping assemblies, but turn all religion into banter and ridicule. But what reason for this desertion? Is not the church of God, God's house? and is it not your Father's house? What injury has he offered, that you should leave his house? Is it not the temple of his grace, and tabernacle of his glory, where his honour

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honour dwells, and where he commands the blessing? Can any other ground equal the entertainment? Has not he promised to meet his people there, and bless 'em? and wilt thou renounce the blessing by forsaking these sacred institutions to which it is annex'd?

CANST thou forsake God's ordinances, and not forsake thy own mercies? No, Yea, to forsake thy holy mountain, O Lord, is to forsake thy self, before whose face is satiety of joys, and pleasantness at thy right hand, eternal. *Psal. xvi. 11. Esay lxxv. 11.*

BY way of advice,

1. *Neglect not the stated seasons of social devotion, i. e. of exalting God with others.*

ORDINANCES are establishments of wisdom and grace, contrived for the benefit of the publick, and the end of God in them can't be answered but in society.

HEARING the word is a religious duty distinct from all others, and by a Divine law is made one part of publick worship, by which our attendance becomes a necessary duty. To dispense with so evident

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dent a precept is open rebellion: to stay at home when able to go out, is bidding defiance to the authority of Almighty God, who commands us to shew our selves in the congregation; 'tis deifying thy self, or making a God of thy own will, in imitation of that pride that was the ruin of angels, who enamoured of their own perfections, would be *Gods* to themselves, and not subject to the checks of a superior: Thus our first parents were decoyed into a belief that the way to be as *Gods*, was to do their own will without any regard to pre-eminence or superior power.

'Tis by uniform and exact obedience to the Divine will, that we arrive at perfection of bliss. His word is a revelation of his will, and the repository of those promises that are exceeding great and precious. *2 Pet. i. 4.* His voice sounds in his word, and he never speaks but what concerns thy eternal state, and wilt thou turn the deaf ear to him who speaks from heaven? Better lose thy power of hearing, than not hear his word: Be frequent
therefore

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therefore in hearing it ; one opportunity lost may prove thy eternal loss.

2. *Preface your hearing with supplications to the throne.*

THE ground must be prepared before the corn be sowed. Ministers sow the spiritual seed, 'tis God only can prepare the heart, and make it fructify and prosper : *Paul may plant* by miracles, and *Apollos water*, but God gives the increase. 1 Cor. iii. 6.

WITH him is the residue of the spirit, therefore address him with fervency for his benediction. Say, to what purpose, Lord, should I ascend to thy holy hill, if thy presence go not with me. Even thine own word, the word of thy grace, and messenger of love will be but a dead letter, if not attended by the word of thy power. Oh animate my dead heart, that thy word may be thy power to my salvation ! What can ministers, apostolical ministers do without the aids of that spirit who indicted the holy scriptures ? Even the bread of life can't feed me without thy blessing. Now I am going to thy temple, open my eyes that I may behold thy glories

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ries, and set open the door of my heart, that the King of glory may make a triumphant entrance.

THE word does not operate by any natural energy; 'tis a Divine instrument, and it is by Almighty power that it becomes effectual to demolish the strong holds of darkness, and to impress the image of the glory of God upon the soul.

THIS celestial treasure comes to you in earthen vessels; the success of their ministrations depends upon the operation of a superior agent: The word is compared to a sword, but mighty only when swayed by the hand of the Spirit, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man. 2 Cor. iv. 7.

MINISTERS who are the delegates of Christ, can only dictate your lessons; none can make thee a successful scholar, but that great prophet and preacher who has his pulpit in heaven. Say therefore in going to hear the word, *Lord*, may I be worthy to see thy dear face, and hear thy blessed voice in the sanctuary.

3. *In hearing attend with reverential awe.*

THUS

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THUS saith *Jehovah* is the preface to every sermon, The voice of God sounds in the ministerial voice. Ministers are the mouth of God who makes the tender of reconciliation by them. 2 Cor. v. 20.

HE who knows our thoughts, is present in the assembly, and speaks in the word : Now, shall not his omnipercipient eye be our awe and dread? That holy eye, which is a witness of all our actions? And shall we be supine, and slack in attention when he utters his voice? To what purpose has God given us the organs of hearing, if we don't hearken when he speaks. He that has ears, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.

IN hearing the word, remember who stands by : The heathen to animate their actions with virtue, said, *that all places were full of God.* Pythagoras one of their philosophers, calls God, *A mind passing thro' the universal nature of things.* *Deus est animus per universam rerum naturam commeans.* Min. Felix.

How shall I avoid distractions in hearing the word? was a question proposed to one of the ancients, who answered,
Mind

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Mind God's presence. Oppose to thy roving mind the awful idea of him who is omnipresent and knows all things: This one would think were sufficient to dash out of countenance all intruding thoughts. The heathen never thought themselves safe at home nor abroad without their *Lares and Penates*, their *domestick Gods*, that were little portable images. Such probably were *Laban's Teraphims* which *Rachel* stole from him. *Gen.* xxxi. 19.

OF the *Thessalonians* 'tis said they received the Gospel, not as the *word of man*, but as *the word of God*, a word cloathed with Divine authority. They saw God in the word they heard. *1 Thes.* ii. 13. He never speaks to us but in matters of the last importance, therefore when ministers publish the glad tidings, the hearer's mind should wholly turn into attention and application: And indeed 'tis then, and only then we hear to purpose, when we attend and bow the will to what we hear, *Luk.* xix. 48. *All the people were very attentive to hear, or hung on his lips*, as the Greek, ἐκκρίματα.

IN going to the sacred courts, fix your
views

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views aright; propose not to yourselves to have your ears regaled with the sound of fine words, or your fancies entertained with bright and beautiful images; but come there to receive the instructions of wisdom, and to get the word transcribed into your hearts, that you may be transformed into the similitude of it. To excite you, consider further;

Is not the power of hearing from God? And can the ear be better employed than to hearken when and what he speaks? Can there be a more delightful melody than the voice of thy God, and thy dear Redeemer? Say not he is a God of terrible Majesty, for the bowels of a Father softens the terror of his voice.

Is not God worthy to be heard? If he be not, who is? He never opens his mouth about light and trivial matters. When he speaks, 'tis upon subjects of the highest moment; well therefore may he challenge our most heedful and serious regards.

IF that dear voice from *Mount Sion* does not charm and captivate our affections, then will he thunder from *Mount Sinai*,

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Sinai, and speak to the contemners of his grace in his hot displeasure. Now he speaks to them in a flame of love, then in flames of inextinguishable fire. Now he addresses sinners with an *olive-branch of peace* in his mouth, beseeching them to be reconciled to his government, then with *alarms of war and direful executions*; such considerations as these one would think were sufficient to rouse men to a sense of their danger and duty.

4. *In worship consecrate your bodies to God.*

In society we can't worship without them; they are the servants of the soul, and should be sacred to his use who made and supports 'em here, and has prepared entertainments suitable to their capacities in the future state. *I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service,* Rom. xii. 1.

N. B. *Christ* formed in the soul transfigures the body into an instrument of righteousness, and makes its service a living acceptable sacrifice to God. The
body

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body 'tis true, as a body, can't be the subject of holiness, however 'tis the herald that publishes to the world the invisible excellencies of a renewed soul: The purity of the heart discloses itself in the pious actions of life.

THE human body once, was a comely and beautiful structure, in which yet remain some relicts of its native beauty; and tho' now mean, miserable and mortal, 'tis designed by divine goodness to be the subject of honour and blissful immortality, therefore Christ died for the body as well as for the soul. *Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body,* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

JUSTLY therefore may God expect proper homage from it on earth, so far as its present station renders it capable. The natural use of inferior creatures was to gratify those sensitive powers that are lodg'd in this tabernacle; from this source the felicities of the animal life flow while the body is maintained and refreshed by these, 'tis fit God should inherit the glory.

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THE body of man is endued with various perfections, whereby it's made capable of honouring God according to the rank it bears among the several tribes of beings. The several parts of the body conspire to serve our best interest.

In the body, to which the soul is confined, the soul is carried to the house of God. Thus the feet are useful. The eyes become instruments of his honour when we behold and adore the perfections of the Creator shining in his works; the eyes, those two great luminaries in the firmament of the body, conduct our motions on earth, and convey to the understanding delightful objects, thereby furnishing it with materials for pious reflections. Even the tears of the eye, when shed for sin, discover a concern for the honour of God and his violated law, and are an acceptable sacrifice.

THE ears are organs admirably contrived to let in the pleasure of sounds, and to convey intelligence from the material world to that noble inhabitant, the mind, that beam of celestial light, thereby exciting it to acts of suitable devotion.

Further,

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Further, it's by the sense of hearing the joyful sound enters the soul, therefore 'tis said *Faith comes by hearing*, Rom. x. 17.

THE tongue is not only adapted to receive the impression of tastes, but to express the sentiments of the mind. By this animal ear we converse also with God as well as with our fellow creatures.

THE tongue of man is the glory of man, and never more so than when it's made the instrument of the Creator's praise, and the good of mankind. *Pf. lvii. 8: Awake my glory*, i. e. my tongue. *Pf. xxx. 12. To the end my glory* (my tongue) *may sing praise to thee*. The tongue is an organ form'd for praise; in heaven 'tis all musick, angels join with it in its melodious strains.

5. *Delight in the communion of saints.*

THIS is an article in our Creed, and this was the genuine primary Christianity, mutual love, glory to God on high, peace on earth, good-will towards men.

IN social worship there is a reciprocal intercourse between the several churches

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of Christ, though they meet in distinct places, and may differ in some speculations and extrinſick modes in publick administrations.

IN congregational worship we are learning one great branch of the religion of heaven, where the high-born assembly adore and admire with united voices. Should not the thought of this reconcile us to a frequent attendance on God in his house on earth?

How can we propose pleasure to ourselves in conversing with the saints in heaven, if converse with them here be not the matter of our choice and complacency? Should not we begin the work of heaven upon earth, and associate with our fellow pilgrims in warbling out the Redeemer's praises? How should the prospect of our being admitted into the general assembly of the first born above, warm us into transports of joy? Do you hope to be entertained with the pleasure of their company in heaven? Then are you glad, when you hear the voice of your devotional friends, saying,

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saying, *come let us go into the house of the Lord, Ps. cxxii. 1.* Go thither, O my soul, as to a celestial repast, and thou shalt sit down under the shadow of his wings with delight, and with pleasure for ever review the moments thus employed!

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Solitude.

DISCOURSE III.

DEUT. XXXIII. 28.

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.

THE great Redeemer, who descended into our world to deliver us from sin (sin, the introducer and sting of death) did not come to save us from death itself; not the mighty monarchs of the earth, nor the distinguished favourites of heaven are privileg'd from its fatal stroke. No exemption from this war.

Moses, legislator, king, and mediator in Israel, who had frequent converse with God the uncreated life (and that face to face, as a man with his friend) must die like other men. The text is a passage taken out of a chapter that accounts for the last words of that illustrious person, who

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who with his dying lips magnifies the *God of Israel* and the *Israel of God*, in both whose service he lived and died, having merited a character that immortalized his fame. In this chapter note

1. *In heaven, God is higher than the highest.*

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that is, the *God of Israel*. Ver. 26. *None like unto God*, who is a Being without beginning, without an equal, and who is the beginning and fountain of being to all created things, visible and invisible. All our actions therefore should be address'd to his honour, who is infinitely superior to all, and has not so much as the shadow of a rival.

2. *Upon earth, Israel greater than the greatest.*

NONE among the nations like *Israel* in honour and happiness. Ver. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help and sword of their excellency.* Ver. 27. *The God of antiquity is thy mansion, and underneath are the arms of eternity.* No people ever so guided and

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guarded as the descendants of *Jacob* in the federal line! God was not only a sun to conduct their steps, but a shield to protect them in their passage thro' the place of dragons. Two things offer themselves to our consideration, *viz.*

That the way of duty is the way of safety, and

That one way to be safe is to live as remote and retired as we can from the hurry and crowd of the world.

I. *That the way of duty is the way of safety.*

INTEGRITY is our preservative and protection. *He who walks uprightly walks surely*, Prov. x. 9. Those only are entitled to God's care who follow his conduct: The way to be shelter'd under the shadow of his wings is by submitting to the constitutions of his government; so that if you would have his power to be your safe conduct, you must make his word the invariable rule of life.

Keep my commandments and ye shall dwell in safety was one of the statutes published upon *Sinai*, Levit. xxv. 18. the way to be safe is to walk by rule: nothing

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thing but sin, which is an errattick motion, can endanger your preservation, because nothing else puts you out of the verge of divine protection: Satan that malicious and potent adversary is bound, and can hurt none till they come within the compass of his chain.

NONE so safe as the servants of the most high God, however mean their station on earth may be. They never advance a step without their life-guards, I mean the holy Angels, who *pitch their tents about those who fear God, and bear them up in their arms that they dash not their feet against a stone*, Ps. xci. ii. Ps. xxxiv. 7.

I shall only add here by way of caution, *viz.* that you be not so solicitous how to be kept from dangers as how to keep from sin, and how to live so as to be worthy of protection; for God is never wanting to those who are not wanting to themselves. Sin will find persons out in the greatest security, and holiness will shelter and secure them in the greatest danger: This discovers the evil of sin and the excellency of religion.

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1. *The evil of sin.*

HOWEVER smooth and pleasant its path may seem to be, 'tis a path of certain danger, for he who is the servant of sin forfeits all claim to the regards of a kind Providence: When forbidden fruit displays its charms, and invites you to taste, dread the pleasure that kindles the flame that is unquenchable. If tempted to enrich thyself by fraud and artful insinuations, dread the gain that will not only usher in the loss of heaven, but sink thee deeper into the pit of darkness and despair.

IF sinners entice and draw thee to the lure, consent not: Shun suspected places and temptations: Come not nigh the road at the end of which is a bottomless pit: Better dwell alone than be a companion of sinners: Take heed you be not found on the devil's ground nor among his servants, for the way to be safe is to keep out of harm's way.

2. *The excellency of religion.*

THOSE who regulate their conduct by the documents of piety, interest themselves in the favour of heaven: The promise

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· mise of the Almighty stands engaged for their security: His omnipotence, that guardian attribute of religion, stands ready to espouse their quarrel, and to make good all the sacred grants and engagements of grace.

THE power of God gives life and activity to the other perfections. Mercy, that darling attribute, and only refuge of miserable objects, would be too feeble to relieve them without the exertion of almighty power: Who would dread the angry resentments of justice, if justice were not supported by an omnipotent arm? Those *promises that are exceeding great and precious* would be but empty sounds, if there were not an almighty hand to execute and accomplish them. By making religion our business we make this power (which one styles *the arm of the eternal Deity*) our friend and ally.

IMPROVE this, by ascribing the glory of your last year's protection to his care who never slumbers nor sleeps: Has he prolonged your life, and secured to you the various blessings of it? Devote that protracted life to the honour of him who

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is the kind and munificent author of all.

SAY, O almighty Preserver! What shall I render? How many of my neighbours are number'd among the dead while I am alive? How many are come to the end of their race, with whom I set out the beginning of the year? How many gone out of our world, many who had a fairer prospect of a long life than I had; I, whose growing infirmities proclaimed the near approach of the king of terrors.

How many by cross and gloomy incidents have been reduced the last year; when the candle of the Lord shined bright upon my tabernacle?

ACKNOWLEDGE your dependence upon the supreme fountain; and as you daily participate of the streams of goodness, let those daily streams lead you up to that upper spring, and be incentives to daily obedience. So much for the first article. In the next place I am to consider what is express'd, namely

II. *That one way to be safe is to dwell alone.*

Israel

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Israel shall dwell in safety alone. Here I'll briefly observe the several denominations the people in the text went under, and then shew *what it is to dwell alone*, and *the advantages of it*.

I. The several denominations they come under, viz. *Hebrews, Israelites, Jews.*

(1.) They were first called *Hebrews* from *Heber*, as the *Assyrians* from *Assur*, *Elamites* from *Elam*. Gen. xiv. 13. one came and told *Abram the Hebrew*. Gen. x. 21. *Shem* the father of all the children of *Heber*, i. e. of the *Hebrew* nation. Ver. 23. *Sala* begat *Heber* the origin of the *Hebrews*. This is authorised by *Balaam's* speech, Numb. xxiv. 24. *Ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Assur, and shall afflict Heber*, i. e. *Assyrians* and *Hebrews*, which probably may refer to their conquest by the *Romans*.

It was called the *land of the Hebrews* before it was called the *land of the Canaanites*. The inhabitants of that province were called *Hebrews* before their descent into *Egypt*. *Joseph* is styled a *Hebrew*,

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Hebrew, Gen. xxxix. 14. Gen. xl. 15. I was stolen away, says he, from the land of the Hebrews, i. e. from that part of Canaan where, with consent of the natives, Abram, Isaac and Jacob usually resided, which was about Hebron, a town in Judea formerly called Kirjath Arba, Gen. xxiii. 2. about 20 miles south of Jerusalem.

(2.) THEY were named children of Israel, as descended from Jacob, who was surnamed Israel by an angel, which name was afterwards confirmed by the Shechina. Hence the adopted part of his posterity are called Israelites and house of Israel, to distinguish them from the offspring of Esau, the brother of Jacob and father of the Edomites, Gen. xxxii. 28. xxxv. 10. Exod. ix. 7.

3. AFTER the captivity of the ten tribes the two remaining tribes were commonly called Jews, from Juda, the royal house out of which the Messiah was to descend. The captives went by this name, which name is also used by the prophets. Some conjecture Jews to be derived from Judea, which word in
my

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my apprehension had its name from *Judah* the Patriarch, and fourth son of *Jacob* and *Leah*.

2. *What are we to understand by dwelling alone?*

SINGULARITY and solitude as they affect religion.

(1.) *Religious singularity.*

I don't mean an affected singularity or a vain-glorious appearance; for all affectation is faulty, and in religion 'tis hypocrisy. What I understand by it, is a Christian behaviour agreeable to the essential and immutable difference between good and evil. Christianity calls for self-denial, and seriousness, and sincere circumspection.

THE interest of the flesh is most predominant every where, hence it is that most are sensual and vicious in their lives: If therefore we expect to arrive safely in the port of glory, we must swim against the stream, set bounds to our violent and raging desires, and see they don't overflow the banks of reason and religion.

THE way to preferment in the Church above is to be nonconformists to this world:

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world: In this sentiment was the great Apostle, who says, *be not conformed to this world*, q. d. why should you, who have mansions of glory in view, form your lives according to the unwarrantable customs of the age and times wherein you live? *Rom. xii. 2.* τῷ αἰῶνι.

By their constitutions the *Jews* were to *dwell alone*, i. e. separate from the rest of the world: They were not to intermix or join in affinity with their immoral and idolatrous neighbours.

BEING a peculiar people chosen out of the world, they were to distinguish themselves from the common mass of mankind, by obedience not only to the laws of nature but to the laws peculiar to their œconomy.

IN the *Jewish* church was a door open to take in Gentiles proselyted to their religion, but they were not allowed to adopt the rites and customs of the forsaken nations into their sacred solemnities.

'Tis observable that the *Jews*, who in their prosperity (when God himself was their King) had a strong inclination to live at large, not only to mix and marry
with

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with the nations, but to reverence and adore their idols; but now in their dispersion, none more careful to dwell alone in midst of crowds, and to keep themselves alone and intire, without mixing with the nations among whom they sojourn either in worship or marriage.

THE same holy singularity is the duty of Christians who live in the midst of a depraved and perverse generation, and who by the contagion of ill examples will infect all around them, without strict vigilance and circumspection, *Phil. ii. 15.*

NOTHING more propitious to human nature than serious religion, 'tis the perfection and excellency of our being as rational creatures. This, this, the one thing necessary; yet so offensive is the gust of religion to sinners, that they prefer the sordid entertainments of sense before all its delightful accommodations. Thus men are intoxicated with sensual pleasures, and by a continual debauch become incapable even of religious thoughts.

SELF-INTEREST is another enemy to practical religion; hence it is that most people

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people espouse the religion of the state, making no scruple of opinions, modes and customs countenanced by the magistrate, because thereby they ensure to themselves the advantages of preferment, power and honour.

THIS is the case of worldlings, whose eyes being dazzled with the lustre of riches, are generally on that side which is uppermost, having nothing in view but secular things, sacrificing even the body and blood of Christ to their greedy and ambitious pursuits, by making the sacred and awful supper a step to preferment.

NOR is reputation a friend to serious piety; when men are infected with false honour, the consequence is, they had rather be applauded and caress'd for libertinism than be ridiculed and scorned for strict adherence to the laws of Christ: So weak are men as to fancy a sort of credit in being flexible to the fashions of the world, and to have the multitude on their side, as if numbers would legitimate their ill actions here, and be a support to them in their future misery.

THUS

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THUS men by gratifying their pride and passions, fortify their prejudices against a devout and pious life; whereas indeed no man can be truly religious till he prefers the honour of God before his own, and has learnt the lesson of forgetting all that men say or think of him.

II. Religious solitude.

By *solitude* here, I don't mean as if no station was safe but the eremitical, or solitary.

I don't mean, *that all other situations of life were absolutely unsafe.*

FOR there's no soil but virtue or vice may more or less grow and thrive in it; he who governs himself by maxims of piety and prudence may with safety dwell any where (as *Lot* in *Sodom*, saints in *Nero's court*) alone or in company, town or country; but were the Christian left to his own liberty, he would shun the place of concourse, and make retirement his option or choice; the reason is obvious, because no man, how perfect soever he may be, is so far refined from dross as to be able always to contend with it in others, especially

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especially where vice is predominant and countenanced by the authority of the multitude.

To such heights is the common degeneracy carried, that company, to which the human nature is adapted, becomes a certain and dangerous snare: Most difficult it is to converse with our fellow mortals, without being infected with the leprosy wherewith they are defiled: Yea, to breathe in the common air is in effect to suck in some infection or other.

NOR do I by *solitude* understand the eremitical life, or that of a *hermit*, viz. a total sequestration from human society; this would be to rescind and annul the social law, which is inscribed on our very nature.

Nor would I be thought to favour those who retire from all secular affairs under pretence of being more religious than others, as the religionists in the popish church do, who cloister up 'emselves like drones, and live at the expence of other people's labours.

BUT by a *private life*, I mean a life as much unincumber'd as possible, a life consistent

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sistent with secular business, and the social acts of religion ; a life in which one may discharge all relative duties, and be serviceable to others, and at the same time secure to himself all the real benefits peculiar to a private life.

So that the life I plead for, is not confined to the country or the desert, but is a retirement that may, in some measure, be enjoyed in midst of a city ; this I take to be agreeable to the maxims of reason, when reason is in the ascendant.

A publick station and popular conduct, may have a blaze of pleasure, but the streams are more muddy and sordid, than those that flow from contemplation, or a converse with books and things unseen : Such is the satisfaction resulting from hence, that some have preferred the pleasure of reading before an intercourse with men whose conversation generally turns upon the vain and frothy.

IN the silence of solitude we may relax and recreate our wearied minds, by contemplating objects infinitely various and delightful ; among others the starry regions, those suburbs of the heavenly city,
those

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those sparkling globes that seem like the decorations and ornaments of the outward court of heaven; How luminous! how bright and refulgent then is the inward court! the seat of God's universal empire, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity! there, there the Ancient of Days shines in radiant manifestations of his glory, as are to us ineffable.

SHOULD our thoughts terminate only on those heavenly bodies so far as conspicuous to the human eye, how entertaining would the speculation be, especially to those who know any thing of their situations, magnitude, distance, order and motion, and consider the perfections of God that shine in 'em.

HERE is an ample field for contemplation in our solitude, what then is the vast and wide circuit of nature? Nor do they want satisfaction who stretch their conceptions beyond the sphere of matter. Such was the satisfaction *Avicen* an *Arabian* Physician and *Philosopher* took in *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, that he read 'em forty times and got them all by heart.

BUT abstract ideas being above the
2. compre-

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comprehension of common readers, and the secret pleasure issuing from the consideration of 'em, being too exquisite and refin'd for their taste, I proceed to some of the moral advantages that attend a private life.

COULD we fully answer the end of our being by the contemplative life, perhaps, in the present state of things, it might be the most eligible when armed with virtue. The difficulties attending the opposite life rendering it often more unsafe and uncomfortable, if not burdensome, tho' I don't say but a man may go to heaven thro' a crowd. But to descend to particulars.

1. *A private life exempts us from the noise and hurry of the world.*

2. *'Tis one genuine method of trying our sincerity.*

3. *It presents us with a proper opportunity of conversing with unseen objects.*

4. *It will be one way of disarming death of its terrors.*

1. *A private life exempts us from the noise and hurry of the world.*

THE world both natural and moral,
was

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was created in a state of perfection; it was man's degeneracy made this lower creation subject to vanity, yet our danger proceeds not so much from the curse upon the creature, as from the corruption of our nature, a nature that defiles whatever it touches.

VANITY and *vexation of spirit* are the titles the scripture gives to all *sublunary things*, titles derived not from their primitive and intrinsic nature, but from the vanity and folly, the caprice and wild ideas of those who possess these things. The danger from the heart within is far greater than that from the world without, which world is the innocent and good creature of God, hurtful to none but those that abuse it.

VIRTUE is no enemy to human grandeur and glory, its proper office being to direct how to improve those high elevations to the best purposes; but on t'other hand, grandeur and glory are enemies to *virtue*, at least are not the best friends to it, nor to the repose and quiet of great men: The pomp and power that distinguish 'em from the vulgar, rather in-

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vites disquietudes and dangers than secures from 'em.

WORLDLY greatness, what is it but great and expenceful vanity; what are crowns, but honour crown'd with thorns? *Oh crown!* said King *Antigonus*, *more noble than happy.* If you would enjoy the pleasure of life, study rather to be good than to be great: the emperor, *Constantine* the great, even in the height of his glory said, *My life is somewhat more honourable than that of shepherds, but more troublesome.*

HIGH places that promise nothing but a perpetual circulation of ease, and honour; content and security, oft portion out to men nothing but vexations, cares and troubles, if not a disgraceful exit. No wonder then, that in our baptism we are directed to renounce the world, and all its pomps and vanities.

THE *world*, which is the grand motive to a publick life, hath, as usually managed, been counted a dangerous enemy, especially that branch of it, styl'd *riches*, a term which has almost monopolized to itself the *name* of the *world*; the reason

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of which I take to be this ; because to be rich, is (generally speaking) to be furnish'd with opportunities to be more haughty and vicious, more oppressive and vile than those who drudge away their time in a lower station.

If Satan had desired leave to multiply riches, honour and power upon *Job*, perhaps, such a temptation would have been a greater trial ; whereas the poverty and pain to which he was reduc'd, was a check upon the extravagance of natural passions, and a correction to levities of thought ; whereas affliction is always look'd upon as a whetstone to virtue, and a friend to religion. Christianity never look'd in so bright a form as when the christian church was under the darkest cloud : never was the world so much the object of their disdain and contempt, as when they were deprived of it by oppressive and barbarous usage. Remarkable was the device which a *Duke of Venice* ordered to be engraven upon his tombstone, *viz. the best thing in the world is to despise the world.*

THOSE who have made the experiment

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ment of both states, have found more satisfaction in the entertainments of a still and quiet solitude, than amidst the clamour, the hurry and noise of the croud. Men's aversion to an obscure and low sphere is grounded upon a mistaken notion of things; for poverty which men so dread, is but a mere suggestion of fancy, all conditions of life being as we make them: 'tis not a man's estate but his mind is the true standard of felicity and misery. In content lies the life of happiness. He is rich indeed who is satisfied with what he has, be it more or less.

If, says bishop *Hall*, "The world
" would make me his minion, it could
" give me but what it has, and what has
" it to give me, but a smock of honour,
" a sound of pleasure, a blast of fame,
" which when I have had, I may be
" worse, I can't be better? I can live no
" whit longer, merrier, or happier. *Contempl.*

OUR Lord, who, tho' heir of all things, renounced the privilege of his Sonship for the form of a servant: He who was the wisdom of God, and best knew how

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to chuse the good and refuse the evil, chose his lot among the indigent and poor, those solitary ones of the earth.

A greater contempt he could not put on our world, than by not being possessor of one part of it; not so much as a house to put his head in. This kind of solitary life became afterwards the favourite profession of multitudes, who look'd upon the world as a scene of delusions, where real and solid pains succeed all our senseless and short-liv'd joys.

To be much in the throng of mankind is not the choice of wisdom, because in the midst of company, we are too often in the midst of folly. The prevailing inclinations of the world are not towards religion and virtue, those eternal dictates of truth; and the multitude not being votaries to godliness, they manifestly prejudice the interests of it. Retirement therefore, as it is an easy thing, so it favours the best and noblest designs, it preserves us from the scene of infection, and cultivates our thoughts and practices in things of the last concern.

For the form of God to know how
II. A

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II. *A private life is one genuine method of trying our sincerity.*

IN company nature may be over-awed, and men act a part and disguise themselves, such powerful restraints are the eyes of spectators: Hypocrites are compared to whited sepulchres, because their hypocrisy is coloured over with acts of seeming virtue and devotion: If they do good, or forbear evil, 'tis with a view to gain so much new reputation from their fellow creatures.

BUT to shun evil when we may commit it without danger of being detected, and do all the good we can in secret, and industriously conceal it, evidences a mind truly upright.

THE complexion of the heart is best discovered in secret, where no created eye is our awe. He who in the darkest recess, gives himself the liberty of thinking, may see God and himself; the light of the mind shines in darkness where there is no stage for shame and fear to act upon, and by consequence no incentive to counterfeit goodness.

PERSONS for fear of men, may be
F 3 tempted

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tempted to decline a religious action, and from sinister views, may declaim against vice, but none of those temptations invade our retirements, where we have none but God and conscience to please or displease : Therefore it has been said, *He is grieved for sin truly, who grieves without a witness* ; so he is really good who is good in secret, where no created eye can be a check upon his actions, or an incentive to them. I can be honest in the dark, said one, and virtuous without a witness.

HUMAN applause has produced many extraordinary good works, and at the same time made hypocrites. The *Pharisees* who brightned their character by open praying, fasting, and dispensing much alms, are yet justly branded with hypocrisy (by him who calls all things by their proper names) the reason is, because their view in those good actions, was to procure the applauding eccho of the croud. With this they fed their wild ambition. This was the vanity that animated their devotion and charity : They thirsted after honour ; to this thirst they yielded without controul. This was the

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the envenomed and fatal bait that was swallowed by fallen angels, viz. an aspiring thought.

WOULD you arrive at the knowledge of your eternal state? one way of knowing it, is to know what manner of persons you are when alone, and in secret. 'Tis there you have a full display of your selves: there as in a glass you may behold the state and constitution of your soul, and know whether sincerity or hypocrisy bears the sovereign and chief rule.

WHEN engag'd in the world, men are not so easily discovered, the great end of conversation being to please those about them; but follow them to their retirement, and there they shew themselves, and make it manifest whether the laws of virtue or vice be predominant in the heart.

EXTERNAL actions are under the restraint of spectators, inward thoughts that are exempt from such curbs make evident the inward disposition of the mind, and discover the man: Therefore review your secret conduct with the utmost strictness, and remember that your sanctity before

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men is no further valuable than as your retirement is pure and upright before the eyes of that infinite Being with whom we have to do in every place, and at all times.

III. *Privacy is a proper opportunity of conversing with unseen objects, God and futurity.*

SOLITUDE duly improved is a friend to piety and devotion; How, you'll say? Why by exhibiting to us occasions of making a nearer approach to God than is commonly allowed by the laws of conversation and business, as they are contrived and executed by the wisdom of the flesh.

How different this state from heaven! where they want no oratory for secret devotion! There's no occasion for retirement there, where the multitude are as holy as they are happy, where all worldly discourses are entirely banished, and where subjects of piety are the only topicks of conversation.

ON earth the case is otherwise; virtue is a stranger to the croud, and shines brightest in obscurity. The generality of
men

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men live as if they had declared war against virtue and piety, there being nothing visible in their lives but characters of vice and libertinism.

To introduce religion into company is to obscure its lustre, and turn its glory into shame: yea to talk of it, especially among gentlemen, is counted a breach of good manners. A christian conversation passes for frenzy and fanaticism among those who are slaves to the passions of life; hence a retreat from the world is necessary, that we may with greater freedom and vigor apply the mind to entertainments that are divine, and have in them an aptitude to kindle and heighten the flame of devotion.

WHILE we converse with men about things beneath, how difficult to call off our affections from the world, and fix them on those above: and the further we launch out into the world, the more do ensnaring and diverting objects increase upon our hands. As things appear remote, and little when viewed thro' the wrong end of a telescope, so an earnest and eager look at earthly things, sets fu-

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ture things at a great distance; and if they don't quite intercept our sight of 'em, they make them (even those awful subjects of heaven and hell) appear with a diminutive aspect; and such are the usual effects of company and multiplicity of business.

IN midst of so many amusements of life, 'tis no easy matter to guard against the common infection. *In the greatest company, said bishop Hall, I will be alone to my self; in the greatest privacy, in company with God.*

LET no man complain for want of company who has God to converse with, God in whose nature and works is an infinite fund of materials for meditation, God who has an inexhaustible variety of delights for the entertainment of his people, and lives for ever to perpetuate them,

GOD sometimes conducts his church into a wilderness, to disentangle her affections from the world, and to give her opportunity of conversing more freely with himself. *Behold, (saith he to Israel) I'll bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her.* Hos. ii. 14.

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whom God has mercy in store for, he brings into a wilderness, into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world. *Henry in loc.*

WHEN we are alone, we are never less alone, for God, who is more than all the world, is with us, and with him we have more to do than with all the world. When we are by ourselves, God, whose essential indivisible presence is every where, is in our company, expecting then suitable thoughts, deportment and addresses from us.

NOR is a future state so visible in the throng of business, as when we are by ourselves: A seasonable retirement is not only a relaxation from the fatigue of company and secular affairs, but furnishes us with an opportunity of contemplating that world which no man alive ever saw, a world in which all men must take up their everlasting abode; that is, either in heaven, a fountain of everflowing joy, where exalted souls are constantly recreated with fresh streams of light and love; or in hell, the empire of darkness and despair.

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despair. In your retirements therefore, extend your serious thoughts to those remote regions that are the eternal seats of pleasure and pain, and remember 'tis wisdom to be very much your own companions, and communicate as little as may be with a fallacious world: nor are we without precedents to countenance this retreat from it.

AMONG the *Jews* were a sect called *Essenes* mentioned by *Josephus* and *Philo Judæus*, divided into contemplative and practical. The former were a kind of hermits who devoted themselves entirely to meditation, as apprehending a private life less exposed to temptations than a publick life. The practical *Essenians* lived in society and married, but were so mortified to the world as if they had lived in the suburbs of heaven.

WHEN our Lord (who spent about 30 years in obscurity) entered upon the stage of action, even then he affected privacy, and sought opportunities to be alone: He withdrew himself not only from the multitude but from his own disciples, that he might pray to his Father

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ther in secret; yea so enamour'd was he with solitude, that he purchased retirement at the expence of night watches.

THE ancient histories of the Church abound in instances of persons who have separated themselves from the world upon a religious account. This was the kind of life the Apstles made profession of, so far as it was compatible to their publick station. In their conduct the private and publick life met, and what is more the end of both lives were answered by them without intereference and clashing. None less fond of this world than the first Christians, nor more intent upon eternal things, which very much recommended to them the solitary life. *Trypho* the Jew goes so far as to upbraid the Christians with folly, because of their contempt of riches.

EVEN Heathens, under conviction of the vanity and vexation of this world, have retired from their high stations. *Diolestan* the Emperor, a cruel persecutor of the Christians, abandoned his empire for a private life, the pleasures of which he prefer'd to all the glories of an imperial crown.

AMONG

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AMONG the *Mahometans* is a religious order that relinquish the publick life of the world, and spend their days in solitude and retiredness, addressing themselves constantly to the great Being in such terms as these, *viz. God Almighty look upon me, I love not the world, but I love thee.*

IV. *Retirement is one way to disarm death of its terrors.*

IN managing this world, the conversation turns upon the affairs of the present life, and these are subjects that divert the mind from serious reflexions, and banish from men all apprehensions of a future state, as if celestial treasures were only visionary and airy dreams.

WE are naturally prepossess'd in favour of sensible things, these being the first entertainments we are acquainted with; our inordinate regards to them will never cease, 'till there be a full and firm persuasion of a better world. And alas! where there is such a conviction, how does it languish like a flower in midst of weeds: the best of men being too fond of present things: Riches, honours, and
pomp

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pomp are like wild herbs that grow in the field of nature, and choak the good seed as it grows up.

WHEN we take the world in this view, we are not required to go out of it, but to banish it out of our hearts, and live in it as dying creatures. But to entertain apprehensions of death, in the hurry of worldly business is as ungrateful as it is difficult.

IN our retirements the thoughts of death are more natural, death itself being a separation from mankind, and a retirement beyond the veil. The shades of solitude bear some resemblance to those of the silent grave, where there's an intercession from all converse and business.

IN *Death* we are left *alone*, abandon'd by all our fellow creatures but earth and worms: A melancholy retirement indeed! a region of impenetrable obscurity, where the sun never shines, and where blood and business circulate no more.

ONE would think when we are alone the thoughts of it would naturally lead us to reflect on the last hour, when we are left alone in the final conflict; and
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when the wheels of life shall stand still, and we be constrained to recede from a sociable world to the grave, that solitary grotto, where no voice is heard, no face is seen, no tongue moves. Solitude admits such instructive Items as these, and by indulging such serious thoughts we die daily, and by dying daily we learn to die well at last.

DEATH is in some measure disarmed of its terrors, when we have learnt of Christ to deny and renounce the interests of the flesh and world; for it is inordinate love to sensual delights that's one reason why men are loth to die. An excessive fondness for the world makes them unwilling to leave it, and at the same time makes the visage of death more ghastly.

AGAIN, the thought of a future state, that strange country, from whence no travellers ever return, can't but be terrible to dying creatures: Men who know the nature of their present existence, situation, and life, dread to be they know not what, and to be they know not where. This makes them unwilling to leave time, and yield to the torrent that
I discharges

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discharges itself into the ocean of eternity

AND that which increases their consternation at the prospect of death, is the pleasure they have in their friends and relatives, houses and lands, and other diversions here that affect their senses; the very thought of parting with these agreeable entertainments creates in them the utmost regret and anguish.

RICHES, that are a congestion or compound of silver and gold, are by the Prophet stiled *thick clay*, being literally the products of the earth, *Habak. ii. 6.* so inclined are men to the earth, that they had rather sit down under this burden of sordid clay, than travel, especially up-hill, which is the road to *Sion*, *Pf. xxiv. 3.*

IN our retirement we are disburden'd of this troublesome incumbrance, *viz.* the world, which is not only a weight that embarrasseth men in their motion toward heaven, but a labyrinth wherein they lose their way to it.

THUS we see people may be very happy without the amusement of company and other diversions. Thus solitude may be

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be a friend to piety, and a recess upon earth become a lesser paradise to the devout pilgrim, who looks upon this world as a strange country, and upon all its accommodations as enticing snares.

By way of advice,

1. *In your retirement guard yourselves against intruders.*

BRING no secret companions (such as terrene and sensual minds, ambition, avarice, pride, &c.) with you. Retire not as the *Israelites* did out of *Egypt* with a mixt multitude, for any irregular passion indulged will divert your thoughts from better things, and prove as fatal to the divine life as converse with the tainted multitude. Thus *Lot* who retained his integrity in *Sodom*, that visible emblem of hell, forfeited his honour in the cave, the place of his retreat.

TAKE heed therefore that you bring not in your train the vexations of life: Be not like *Lot's wife*, who carried her fetters along with her out of *Sodom*, who when she left the town left her heart with her treasures behind.

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IF the heart does not retire from the world with the body, we defeat and overthrow the great and valuable ends of solitude. When you retire from the world with a religious view, leave your worldly thoughts, those fetters of the soul, behind, for these will disturb your repose in secret; and while you entertain any unhallowed thoughts you exclude God, who will not dwell where vanity reigns.

WHILE vain and vile thoughts lodge within us, the King of glory stands without, grieved to see himself excluded while his enemies are entertained and embraced.

LET no day pass without thoughtful views of things to come, and reviews of things past, always banishing out of your minds all the pleasing ideas of pomp, riches, honour and pleasure, looking on them only as mere and vanishing shadows of happiness.

EMPLOY your meditations about nothing but what may inform the mind, and furnish it with a treasure of useful ideas, such as may influence and regulate your course of life.

VAIN

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VAIN thoughts intrude upon the best Christians, and tho' we can't shut them out, yet we may deny them entertainment.

How long, says the Prophet, *shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* He does not say, how long shall they haunt thee, but how long wilt thou entertain them as guests and lodgers? No wonder he cautions men against entertaining 'em, since no thief in the house can be so dangerous to our prosperity, as a vain thought lodg'd in the heart will be to our soul, *Jer. iv. 14.*

ONE said, such a person *did not profit by his travels*: No wonder, said Socrates, *for he took himself along with him.* Nor wilt thou profit by retiring from the croud, if thou bring thy carnal and corrupt self with thee: 'Tis not enough to be oft by ourselves, unless we discharge the mind of its vices and burdens, by making religion our chief exercise; it's necessary to discard our old way of living, and even ravish our true selves from our sinful selves.

THE mind itself is the disease, and must be recalled from its wild and wanton tra-

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verses, and confined to its proper province; that's the true solitude, and may be enjoyed any where tho' more commodiously apart.

IN a word, keep in with conscience; make no false steps in the presence of that unseen Judge. Reverence its dictates, as one who believes it to be God's representative in thy breast: Abandon those passions that are most apt to raise storms within. Conscience is the test of every mind; to sin against its admonitions is not only to disturb thy tranquillity, but provoke God to make thy own conscience thy hell.

2. *Let the Oracles of God be your daily study in your solitude*, I mean the *holy Scriptures*, those inspirations of the Almighty, statutes enacted by him whose throne is in the heavens, statutes contriv'd and dictated by unerring wisdom for the benefit of fallen man. Hence those expressions, *thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path; the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light*, that is a beam of light darted from him who is the fountain of light, to conduct

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duct men to heaven, the mansion of uncreated light, *Psal. cxix. 105. Prov. vi. 23.*

WITH what pleasure should we converse with the holy Scriptures, that are so many letters sent us from the supreme court, in which the tongue of God himself speaks to us; and what he speaks being always important, challenges our most awful regards and attention.

THE Bible is a history of wonderful things; here the wonders of time and eternity are illustrated, invisible things made visible, things remote made nigh. No book but the Bible discovers the original of mankind, the fall of man, and his restoration by the promised Messiah. Here also is brought to our view a tremendous futurity, that unseen world in which there is a most visible display of the divine perfections, vindictive and merciful.

By this book the ignorant and illiterate become learned in the laws of salvation, and because we are apt to slight things that are obvious and plain, here also are mines too deep for the line of human

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human understanding to reach. In it are difficulties 'tis true, divine and majestic sublimities. It becomes the Holy Ghost to write in a method that the wisdom of man should bow before it; this is not to discourage our converse with it, but to check confidence in our own wisdom, therefore is no objection against reading them.

HE who made us insists upon it that we be ruled by his will, and study the precepts of the word as branches of divine revelation, and maxims by which we are to regulate our lives in every relation and capacity.

To encourage our obedience, there are *promises* that are inestimably great and precious, comprehending the highest felicity man is capable of, 2 *Pet.* i. 4.

STUDY the *threatnings* as incentives to holy fear; in them we behold a most dreadful declaration of justice! what is the unquenchable fire but the execution of threatnings?

LET the Bible be your daily and delightful companion; glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou Book of books, and stand
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ard of truth! Many human books have done worthily, but thou, O my blessed Bible, hast excell'd them all! they have slain their thousands, thou thy ten thousands: 'Tis by thee the children of darkness have been transformed into children of light! that sinners commence saints! that heaven is brought down to our earth, and that earth is carried up to heaven. In heaven, O my dear Bible, are thy songs sung for ever and ever!

In thee, O sacred volume, is found the river whose streams make glad the city of God, and that tree of knowledge by which we may be made wise unto salvation.

SEARCH your Bible, and in it you'll find paradise lost and regain'd; search, and in this sacred field you'll find the pearl of great price, Christ, in whom center all the treasures of grace and glory.

3. *Make your own mind your constant companion.*

ACCUSTOM yourselves to speak to yourselves, I say to yourselves, with whom you have more business than with all the world.

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world. Know thyself, was a precept so divine and important, that the Heathens attributed its original to the gods.

MAKE thy heart thy home, and be not a stranger at home, like the harlot whose feet abide not in her house: Man is an active creature, but few of his actions concern himself directly: What we do is generally to please others, thereby setting a higher value on their esteem, than the real and true ease of our own mind.

A wise man may be good company to himself, yea the best, if he has learned the divine art of conversing with his own heart, a subject inexhaustible, and will furnish us with perpetual matter for contemplation and study, *Psf. iv. 4.*

KEEP yourselves from all those entertainments that have in them a tendency to divorce you from yourselves; disentangle your affections from all objects that are foreign to your best interest, and espouse nothing so much as your own salvation, the *one thing necessary.*

HAVE you not lived long enough for others? 'Tis high time you should now

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learn

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learn to live for yourselves. Summon in your erratick thoughts and straggling affections, and let them do duty and shew piety at home. Abandon that tumult of conversation thou hast contracted in the busy and noisy world, and live out the remnant of life for thyself, in full persuasion that either heaven or hell is at the end of thy race, that death stands at thy door and will soon force its entrance.

SIR *Francis Walsingham*, Secretary of state to *Queen Elizabeth*, towards the close of his life retired from all publick business; and was observed to be very pensive and thoughtful in his solitude. In his letter to the Lord Chancellor *Burleigh* he writes thus, *viz.*

“ WE have lived enough to our
“ country, to our fortunes and to our so-
“ vereign; 'tis high time we begin to
“ live to ourselves and to our God.”
Whereupon some courtiers were sent to divert him, to whom he said, “ Ah!
“ while we laugh all things are serious
“ round about us. God is serious when
“ he preserves us, and has patience to-
“ wards us: Christ Jesus serious in dying
“ for

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“ for us : The Holy Ghost serious when
“ he strives with us : The holy Scripture
“ is serious when 'tis read before us : The
“ whole creation is serious in serving God
“ and us : They are serious in heaven
“ and hell, and shall a man who has one
“ foot in his grave jest and laugh ?

WE are to account for ourselves here-
after, therefore we should take a particu-
lar account of ourselves now, that we
may know in what relation we stand to
a future state, and whether our everlast-
ing abode will be in regions of darkness
or mansions of light.

MERCHANTS are careful to view their
books and state their accounts, by which
they learn whether their affairs be in a
declining or thriving posture. A much
greater reason there is why we should
take frequent surveys of ourselves, and
balance accounts between God and our
hearts. What, oh sinner, what satisfacti-
on ? What pleasure canst thou have in
thy life, in thy estate, in thy relatives,
without a well-grounded hope of doing
well beyond the grave ? Hope 'tis true is
the first fruit of happiness ; but in this re-

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spect hope is as a lottery, where for one prize there are a hundred blanks ; so for one whose hope proves a price, or a sure entail'd estate, there are great numbers whose hope will prove a blank, a vain and vanishing shadow.

THE heart by a strange artifice imposes upon men, and no wonder, since clouds of darkness envelope and surround the mind, so that 'tis no easy task to come at the knowledge of ourselves; and that which encreases the difficulty is, men are ignorant of their danger; and what is worse their ignorance makes them fearless and easy; yea so infatuated are sinners, that their delusion becomes their pleasure, and they hug the cheat.

WELL then, if you would be instructed in the mystery of knowing yourselves, improve your solitary hours; complain not for want of company and converse, for he who has a God, a soul, and a Bible, is never without company and business.

4. *In your retirement let sensible things conduct your thoughts to spirituals.*

THUS

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THUS we are taught by the Apostle, who informs us *that since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divinity, things in themselves not visible, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*, Rom. i. 20.

By spiritualizing earthly things we do as it were transmute dross into gold, by making creatures as steps to mount us up to God the Creator of them; let creatures that are your comforts like so many streams lead you to the fountain.

IN the face of nature we may behold his complexion who is the God of nature. Can you see a production out of nothing, particles of earth turned into stars, fish formed out of a fluid mass, a vital warmth infused into a world of terrestrial animals; and not say *that power belongs to God?* Ps. lxii. 11.

CAN you behold those immense globes, viz. sun, moon and stars hanging like so many balls in the air, and not admire the power that made and supports them? self-balanced, they hang on their centre without any material pillars. Can you behold their admirable harmony, the regularity

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gularity and constancy of their motion, and not see the contrivance of infinite wisdom, and the excellency of the eye that conducts them in their respective orbits?

OUR Lord trained up his disciples by representing to them spiritual things by natural things; *e. g.* vines, lilies, pearls, tares, leaven, water, bread, nets, fish, salt, oil, lamps, &c. were metaphorical texts he often spiritualized for the improvement of his audience. By these plain metaphors, as by so many channels, he conveyed the most useful instructions to his followers. Thus he turned serpents into spiritual bread, and the element of water into wine.

THUS we may behold the world above in the world below, God in his creatures. Yea there is no creature, how mean soever, but may be a preacher to man, tho' he be never so learned.

WHATEVER sphere you move in, whether publick or private, poor or rich, neglect not the duties of the closet. Let the tide of business run ever so high, business must always give way to religion and the stated exercises of devotion. IF

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IF your inclination and circumstances be not suited to the precepts of strict retirement, adorn the station wherein you are fixt. Improve your time, and look upon it as the richest part of your treasure: Guard against the contagion of vice wherewith you are surrounded.

IN a word, imitate our great Lord, who while he lived on our earth, was dead in his regards to earthly things, and acted here as one who belonged to the spiritual world: Go and do so likewise, and where he triumphs thou shalt reign for ever; to him be eternal glory and praise. *Amen.*

*The Origin and Progress of Divine
Worship by Religious Songs.*

DISCOURSE IV. and V.

ESSAY XLII. 10.

Sing to the Lord a new Song.

NO moment of our life, but may be stiled a moment of mercy, being constantly refreshed with streams of divine goodness, streams that never run dry tho' in a perpetual flow, streams that are never interrupted, tho' strongly opposed by the tide of corrupt nature, and should not that uninterrupted succession of flowing benevolence be daily acknowledged by the daily ascent of devout and grateful thoughts?

IN our dutiful returns to this fountain of mercies, a particular regard should be had to *Jesus Christ*, the extent of whose death

death the context accounts for, and as it is a new discovery of affection to the Gentiles, challenges new songs.

THE promised Messiah was equally intended for the benefit of Jews and Gentiles, or the nations who were not of the twelve tribes, only the Jews had the primary offer and fruits of salvation. In this chapter the Mediator appears in the height of his glories, which are here displayed in view of *Israel*, and the then forsaken nations.

OUR Lord was the light that shone in all the types and figures, those mystical shadows under the old testament. It was to the *λόγος*, the blessed Messiah, that all the Patriarchs and Prophets had an eye, and it was by that obscure light that all their devotions were guided.

THE first promise of Christ was made to *Adam*, and repeated to the *Jews*, among whom he was born, and to whom he first published the glad tidings he brought from heaven; this demanded thanksgiving from them, but a new song of thanksgiving from the Gentiles who are privileged with brighter rays of light than

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that

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that which first shined in *Judea*, v. 6. therefore it follows, viz.

Sing to the Lord a new song ; q. d. express new resentments of gratitude for this new mercy, to wit, Christ revealed to the Gentiles. This return was to be by religious songs.

HERE I'll briefly consider the *original and progress of Divine worship by religious songs, then point at the poetical works in our Bible, and shew how religious songs are proper modes and methods of praise for mercies received.*

I.

I will consider the *original and progress of divine worship by religious songs.*

THIS mode of adoration being always more or less used by the nations, I'll briefly attempt to trace it up to its first spring, tho' it be something difficult, because the monuments of the first ages are very sparingly transmitted to us. Little is said of the antediluvian devotion, only they *called on God, and sacrificed*, and probably upon altars, because *Noah*, immediately upon his quitting the ark, did build an altar, on which he offered a sacrifice
of

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of thanksgiving, and after that an altar was a constant appendix to a patriarchal tent.

To these patriarchs the revelations made to the old world were renewed, and the manner how they and the uncultivated nations made their grateful returns to God is now the subject of our enquiry.

1. *In those early periods of time the manner of their religious rejoicings was not only by sacrifices, but by exultation, leaping and dancing for joy.*

NOTHING, even now, more natural than for men upon sudden emergencies, to express their joy by various and uniform'd motions of body, as jumping, leaping, and clapping of hands; their religious singing, which at first was the sound of unpolish'd nature, was accompanied with dancing.

MENTION is made in history of dancings at publick rejoicings for victories; and at the celebration of some religious ceremony, as at the procession made by King *David*, when he brought the ark into *Sion*: The simplicity and plainness of that religious act, which his Queen ridiculed, was its excellency, because of its near approach

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to nature, that affects to appear in a plain
dress. 2 Sam. vi. 14, 20.

Addison, in his account of the modern
Jews, says, that at the pronouncing of
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth, they
jump up three times. The *Abyssinian*
Christians are said to hold their festival-
solemnities by dancing, skipping, and
clapping of hands, to *the God of Jacob*.
The *Mahometans* to this day praise God
by singing and dancing. These motions
of the natural body were significations of
a mind inspired with grateful resentments
for mercies: as heaven is prepared for the
entertainment of the body, 'tis but equal
and just it should bear its part in the
service of heaven here.

2. *These gesticulations, and agitations*
of the body, did at length grow into lan-
guage.

To illustrate this, it may be proper to
observe four things, viz.

1. *That the first religious songs were*
unpolished draughts of nature.

2. *That this natural kind of poetry in*
worship gave birth to the artificial.

3. *That*

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3. That the artificial method of adoration by songs is very ancient.

4. Of all the ancient poetry with which the East abounded, none but that of the Hebrews has reached our hands.

1. The first religious songs in worship were rough and unpolish'd draughts, or copies of nature.

AN inclination to musick or harmonical sound, a sound so ordered or managed as to please the ear, seems innate or natural to mankind. Among the ancients poetry and dancing, *i. e.* comely and graceful motion, were accounted parts of musick, and made part of their religious adorations.

EACH nation, each country, each temper, each passion, says Father *Calmet*, has its natural rhetorick and poetry, and is as old as the first man. Vehemence of expression, daring figures, and elevation of thoughts in proportion to the quality of the subject, makes up, adds he, what I call natural poetry, some remains of which we have in the following instances, *viz.*

1. Before the deluge, in *Lamech's* discourse to his wives. *Gen. iv. 23.* Hear my voice,

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voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech, for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

2. AFTER the deluge, the blessing pronounced on *Shem* and *Japhet*, and curse upon *Canaan* is in a poetick strain. *Gen.* ix. 25, -- 27. *Noah said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.*

So *Jacob's* last words to his sons, *Gen.* xlviii. 3,--22. The expressions in these scriptures are poetical, which consist altogether in the loftiness and sublimity of the style, and not in the exact measure of the syllables according to the modern poetry. The whole was nothing but figurative and sublime: In this consisted the nature of ancient poetry before the invention of methodical.

THE ancient *Hebrews* imitated nature very much in their poetick composures, expressing their sentiments without art, industry, or elaborate study; all was natural and moving without affectation. The
spiritual

spiritual songs in the new testament are of the same strain with those in the old; they were extemporate effusions and sudden effects of a supernatural impulse, without any artful ranging of the words.

THESE religious hymns were sometimes composed by women, and illiterate men whose tongues were made use of as organs by the spirit of God, as in the song of *Moses*, of *Hannah* the mother of *Samuel*, and of those two heroines, *Deborah* and *Judith*; the songs of the *blessed Virgin*, *Zacharias*, *Simeon*, &c. were *extempore* productions without premeditation.

2. *This natural poetry gave birth to the artificial.*

IN process of time the affections and sentiments of the mind were exprest by artful figures, and to render the sound more smooth and sweet, they measured their words, which gave existence to regular verses, in which are represented the passions and thoughts in studied terms, and in a concise lively manner.

THUS we honour God by a *vocal act*, in *singing of Psalms*, and *spiritual hymns*: The voice is the outward expression of
our

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our affections towards God our great benefactor. To praise him by religious singing is an institution of his own establishment, the essence of which consists in an external act ; but to render the vocal action acceptable, the concurrence of the heart in singing is necessary.

We don't read in the Bible of mental singing, or singing of the heart without the tongue: Nor do I see how this part of devotion can be performed without the voice ; bare reading and saying words is not singing. To sing is to make melody with the voice, and this can't be done without something of tune and harmony.

3. *This artificial method of vocal adoration is very ancient.*

THE eastern nations were the first who cultivated men's genius to musick and poetry, and made it a great part of their religion and laws, some footsteps of which we find among the *Syrians, Arabians, and Egyptians*, the last of which consecrated to certain Deities all manner of songs. When the ox *Apis*, one of the *Egyptian Gods*, appeared abroad, he was attended with a great many children who sung verses to his

his praise; thus they made religious singing part of their religion.

WE read of hymns composed in the praise of *Osiris*, a famous King of *Egypt*, who being dead, was, according to the opinion of those days, chang'd into an ox, in which form the *Egyptians* worshipped him. This method of worship by sacred songs was greatly esteemed in the first ages of the world.

THE reason of their mighty reverence for it, was because of its beneficial effects upon mankind: As then managed, it was useful to inspire 'em with a teachable disposition to beget in 'em a veneration for the Gods, to form their lives, to regulate the passions, and prevent their immoderate sallies.

WHAT we now call musick is very different from that of the ancients; it was applied by them in order to excite this or that particular affection, passion or temper of mind, the tunes and measures being suitably adapted to such designs, whereas those are almost quite neglected in our present musick, the chief design being now to please the ear.

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IN short, they had hymns every where which they sung in honour of their Gods. *Pythagoras* order'd his disciples to begin the day with *musick, meditation and prayer*, those nations who had not the art of writing, preserved the histories, learning and religion of their country in verses, which they committed to memory; thus the *Druids* and *Bards* did among the *Germans*, *Gauls* and *Britons*. The *Grecian* worship was in a great measure made up of poetry, which at first was lookt upon as sacred and divine, but more farther on.

4. OF all the ancient religious poetry, none but that of the *Hebrews* has reach'd our hands.

IN their religious worship they made use of songs, but we have no remains of their sacred poetry, except a few fragments that are conveyed to us in the Bible, which leads to the next head, where I am

II.

To consider the poetical works in the *Holy Scriptures*.

IN our Bible are several divine songs calculated for divine worship, and very proper to animate our devotion: these are compos'd

compos'd after the ancient rules of poetry being writ in the pathetick manner, with all the engaging airs that fine metaphors, elegant figures, bold and elevated thoughts can give. What harmony? What smoothness? What beauty, in the stile of Scripture-Songs? It abounds with pleasing and grateful repetitions, and the same sentiments are gracefully exprest twice over in different terms, which is an obvious instance of the old poetick stile; which leads me to the poetical books in our Bible, among which I rank *Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations*.—All these books are writ in verse, besides a great many other passages dispers'd up and down in Scripture.

THE book of *Job*, the most ancient of these books, is writ in *Hebrew* metre, at least in a poetick stile, a stile for its elegancy and loftiness may compare with any *Epick* Poem.

THE *Psalms* are an *Enchiridion* of *lyrick verses* or spiritual songs, in which there is a pleasing variety of pious matter, and diversity of graceful figures, every way suited for the enlargement and elevation of devotional minds.

THE

THE book of *Proverbs* is a collection of moral and divine sentences, calculated for the conduct of human life.

ECCLESIASTES for its restrain'd stile generally passes for a poetical book.

THE *Song of Solomon*, which for its excellency is stiled song of songs, is both a *pastoral* and *epithalamium*. As a *pastoral* it represents the reciprocal intercourse between Christ and his people, under the ideas of a shepherd and shepherdes.

It is also a *nuptial song*, or a poem in praise of our Lord and his church, under the metaphors of groom and bride.

THE *Lamentations* of *Jeremiah* the prophet, are mournful poems penned after the acrostick manner, according to the order of the *Hebrew* alphabet; as there are sacred songs of praise, so there are sacred elegies or songs of lamentations, expressing the passion of grief.

THERE are other parts of Scripture writ in a poetick manner, upon particular emergencies, in which we are entertained with noble examples of the true sacred sublime.

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THE first subject that looks with a poetical aspect seems to be *Gen. iv. 24.* *Lamech said — Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech, for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.* *Noah's* dying speech looks like another instance of natural poetry, *Gen. ix. 25.* so *Jacob's* *Gen. xlix.* the fifteenth chapter of *Exodus*, is a poem of praise composed by *Moses*; and sung by him and the children of *Israel* in honour of God for their miraculous deliverance at the Red sea.

DEUT. xxxii. is another divine poem, monitory, prophetick and eucharistical, in which *Moses* concludes the mournful scene of life. He breathes out his life in a religious song.

IN the fifth chapter of *Judges*, and *1 Sam. ii. 1.* — we have the songs of *Deborah* and *Hannah*, songs that appear to us in a majestick dress. There are a great many more poetical passages, which I omit.

BEFORE I proceed to the next general head, it may not be amiss to make these following reflexions.

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I. *THE sublime stile no where so conspicuous as in Scripture songs.*

SIR R. Blackmore speaking of the poetical parts of the Bible, says, that in his opinion, they are nobler examples of the true sublime, than any can be found in the Pagan writers. The images are so strong, the thoughts so great, the expressions so divine, the figures so admirable, bold and moving; that the wonderful manner of these [sacred] writers is quite inimitable. *Paraph. on Job Pref.*

How beautiful are their expressions! How moving the sentiments; and where the passions are not so sensibly toucht, the want of the tender is admirably compensated by surprizing metaphors, fine paintings, noble and beautiful comparisons, but the spirit, the beauty, and essential graces of the original are lost in the translation. See R. Temple, *Monsieur Calmet*.

2. *MODERN songs vastly different from the ancient ones.*

THE taste of our times is very unlike that of the ancients in musick and poetry. In their compositions was a very great

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great simplicity, an awful gravity animated by the force of a pure natural genius, a very little mixture of art, but strong and powerful efforts of nature: The whole adapted so as to answer the grand design, which was to instruct the mind, and to affect the passions in the most tender and soft manner.

SOME of the modern compositions, have indeed more of the polite and artful in them, but the beauties of nature are in a manner lost among the rules of art; they write in a stile that is more correct, but few of them in those strains of piety which adorn the ancient poetry, and which doubtless was the true use and proper end of a poetic genius.

THE solemn, the useful, the grave, the serious is in a great measure banisht out of our poetick world, and is even a stranger to our heroick poems: And succeeded by the ludicrous, vain, and frothy.

WHAT are the common productions of our poetic wits, especially stage poets, but indecent approaches to the mind, an alarm to the criminal passions, if not an open attack upon the laws of virtue and honour,

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nour, by which the morals of men are
poisoned.

3. *THE ancient songs seem to be imitations of the angelick.*

WHEN the foundation of our earth was laid, the holy angels, those morning stars, addrest the Almighty Creator with songs of congratulation and joy. No wonder their sentiments were exprest in poetick strains, when the subject of their song was poetical, for the *creation* itself is (in the apostolick language) a *poem*, Rom. i. 20. *the invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made*; in the original it is by the *poems*, i. e. works that are made, ποιήμασι.

WHERE the poetry is methodical, it is the work of wit and skill; the creation is such a work, the work of counsel, formed by the most exact rules of wisdom. As a piece of poetry presents its reader with the wit, ingenuity and fancy of the poet, so the works of creation present spectators with a transcript of infinite wisdom; therefore the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, called *Jerusalem*, translates Gen. i. 1. *In wisdom God created the heavens*

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vens and the earth. So the *Psalmist*, *Psal.* civ. 24. *Oh Lord how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all.*

THE creation is a work of design; a contrivance formed according to the model of infinite understanding. *He made every thing beautiful in his time.*

ALL creatures are framed by a rule, or line, as the *Psalmist*, when he speaks of the heavens, expresses it, *Psal.* xix. i. *their line is gone forth thro' all the earth,* i. e. their admirable order, harmonious proportion, and periodical revolutions are displays of astonishing skill, and always conspicuous and instructive to a human eye, wherever they shine.

No creature so mean and minute, but glitters with a beam of infinite skill: It is this harmony in the creation, that made some of the old Heathen frame the images of their gods, with musical instruments in their hands; signifying thereby, that all things were framed by the rule of proportion: *Charnoc* v. i.

PHILOLAUS of *Crotona* a *Pythagorean* said, *that all things were made by necessity*

H

sity

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sity and harmony, Diog. Laert. in vitam.*
The Pagans could discern the wisdom
of the Creator, sparkling in the exact-
ness and regularity of his works. Some
of them have stiled *God Harmony* and
Musick, because every thing is made by
rule.

THUS the new creation is stiled God's
Poem, *Eph. ii. 10. We are his workman-
ship [ποίημα] created in Christ Jesus to
good works, Gr.* We are God's poem
created in Christ, that is, the new-man
is a work of peculiar exactness and ex-
cellency, in whom appears the harmony
of divine truths, and union of the divine
Attributes.

IN composing a poem, men express
their sentiments in the sublime and lofty,
are critical in observing numbers, measures,
quantity of words and syllables. Beams of
most sublime wisdom shine in all the works
of God, but no where with that resplen-
dency as in our redemption. Upon this
occasion, an army of celestials joined
*with the angel singing praises to God, saying,
Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace,
good will towards men, Luke ii. 13, 14.*

THE new creature is a work of design, and has something in it that is very sublime and great, not only as it is a participation of the divine nature, and a resemblance of God in general, but as it is a workmanship most exquisitely curious, a work in which the perfection of wisdom is displayed in a very peculiar manner.

Application.

1. *Honour God with your voice.*

How? Not only by speaking honourably of him, but by singing his praise, by making melody with the tongue: This was a duty well known and much practised among the ancients, who praised their gods by vocal accents.

THE great work of men, said a *Heathen Moralist*, is to *sing the praises of the gods*, who have confer'd upon them the gift of articulating sounds. *Olympus* the scholar of *Marsyas* composed religious songs, which were sung in the worship of the gods; and this mode of worship, says *Plutarch*, they used in his time at the solemn feasts of the gods. *Plut. Mor.*

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It's our undoubted duty not only to speak in praise of God, and his immense perfections, but to tune the voice, and sing psalms and divine hymns in honour of our great Creator and Redeemer.

2. *Cause your children to be taught how to honour God by singing*, I mean, *psalms and spiritual songs*.

THE voice is natural, to tune it and even to speak is artificial; the tune and speech are the work of art, and must be learnt, for they are not born with us, therefore children must be instructed in them, and that betimes, because their voice then is most capable of regulation.

THIS a method used of old by the Pagans. The ancient *Greeks* valued themselves very much upon their being early instructed and trained up in musick, being of opinion it was a proper method to form the minds of youth to virtue and war.

IN those days even the forsaken nations employed all their musical skill in religious composures and adorations, and the institution of youth; but this was before their taste was vitiated by the theatre.

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THE same moralist adds, that the principal work of musick was to convey (in the most agreeable manner) their thanksgiving to the gods, and acknowledgment of their goodness to men.

Now if children be not instructed how to sing psalms, what shall they do when they become heads of families? Because they know not how to lead a psalm they drop the duty entirely, and thus one tribe in *Israel* is lost, and one commandment blotted out.

LET parents look to it, that this defect in their children be not the fruit of a defective education. If the songs of *Sion* be banished out of their houses for want of timely instruction how to sing them, you are accessory to the sin, and punishable for it.

THEREFORE this should be one article in the education of children, who should have it in great veneration, not only for its Divinity and delicious accents, but as it leads them to virtue and religion. When they learn to sing, it should be in a way of subserviency to religion; those therefore who are instructors of youth

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should be men of piety and probity.

MONSIEUR *Rollin* tells us, that the main design of the university of *Paris* is to make young scholars good Christians. This is a good precedent to those universities that pretend even to higher degrees of purity. Where religion is neglected in Christian schools, those schools come short of the Heathens, who took the utmost care to instruct young people in the rules of morality, and also short of a *Popish* university, where students are made Christians as well as scholars.

3. *Let us take a short survey of the Jewish practice upon this subject.*

IN the song of *Moses* at the Red sea we have a compleat piece of poetry and musick, and yet in all his law no mention is made of *musick* at their religious feasts, only the institution of *trumpets*.

THE first who introduced musick into their religious festivals was *David*, whose soul was musick and whose breast a lyre. He composed psalms and hymns, which the Levites are taught to sing at their tabernacle solemnities; this with the instrumental was afterwards brought into the

the temple. Tho' they abounded in poetry of all kinds, yet it does not appear that they had any musick adapted to the theatrical and dramattick performance; nor indeed that they had any professed poets among them, tho' they writ hymns or songs, after the art of poetry was invented and cultivated by the *Greeks*. We read how *David* was lampoon'd in a drolling poem sung by the drunkards, *Psal.* lxxviii. 12.

POETRY and musick were made use of in their funeral obsequies. The first ode of this nature was composed and sung by *David* upon the death of an enemy and a friend, viz. *King Saul* and the *Prince his son*.—*The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places: How are the mighty fallen, tell it not in Gath. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul who cloathed you in scarlet. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women,* 2 Sam. i. 17—27.

WE have another elegy or funeral hymn made by *David* upon the occasion

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of the death of *Abner*, uncle to King *Saul*, and general of his army, 2 *Sam.* iii. 33, 34. Thus *Jeremiah* composed a mournful poem upon the death of King *Josiah*, 2 *Ch.* xxxv. 25.

THE *Therapeutick sect* among the *Jews*, who affected the contemplative life, and most mortified to the world of any people in it, yet solemnized their festival days by singing and dancing. *Philo Judæus de vita contempl.*

THE *Jews*, whose minds were much set upon funeral pomp, shewed the most sensible marks of grief, and hired mourning women to encrease the lamentation by singing mournful songs. We read of persons who were *skilful* in the art of *lamentation*, *Amos* v. 16.

IN our Saviour's time we find a company of minstrels hired to play doleful tunes at the funeral of the ruler's daughter. These artificial mourners were to add a kind of magnificence to the solemnity, and put accents upon the sorrow of the real mourners; a custom borrowed from the Heathen, *Mat.* ix. 23. I conclude this in the words of *M. Abbot Fleury*, viz.

WE

WE must not wonder that our taste of poetry is so different from that of the ancients, because our modern compositions are such miserable stuff in comparison of theirs. We write in a more correct style, but not alter'd for the better. Love songs and drunken catches are still the productions of our top-wits: In defiance of all antiquity, whom yet we pretend to imitate, we have found out the means to stuff our tragedies and heroic poems with little mean amorous intrigues and follies, without any regard to the gravity of those works that are said to be so solemn and serious. I can't persuade myself that this is the true use of a poetical genius. I can never believe that God endows a man with a fine and lively imagination, with beautiful and sublime sentiments, with an easy and natural expression, &c. to no other end but that he should employ them upon trifling and wanton subjects. I much rather think these divine accomplishments were intended to give us a relish of solid truths, to render virtue and goodness more amiable, and enflame us with the love of all

that may feed and improve our souls.

EITHER therefore poetry in general must be condemned (which the learned will never agree to) or its course must be diverted to a nobler channel, turned to subjects worthy of its divine original, and made to go hand in hand with true philosophy, that is, with sound morality and solid piety.

Clemens of Alexandria, who was thoroughly vers'd in antiquity, assures us that the *Hebrews* in their temple musick resembled for the most part the gravity of the *Dorick* manner of singing, one of the most antient as well as the most serious, and very proper to celebrate the majesty of the Lord, who would be served with fear and reverence.

THIS manner was extremely well adapted to the genius of the ancients, whose musick especially that made use of in religious matters, was always very grave and solemn, and infinitely removed from what is practis'd at this day in our churches, where songs and airs are suffer'd to be play'd, which have as little of seriousness in them as those of the stage.

Monsieur Calmet. Antiq. sacred and prophane Dissert. I, II. New

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DISCOURSE V.

HAVING dispatch'd the two former propositions, relating to the original and progress of divine worship by religious songs and poetical works in the holy Scripture: I now proceed to the third observation, *viz.*

III.

As religious songs are proper expressions of praise for mercies received, so new mercies call for new songs. I'll sing a new song unto thee, Pl. cxliv. 9. xl. 3.

1. *What are these new songs?*
2. *How must we sing them?*
3. *Who must sing them?*

1. *What are these new songs?*

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SONGS of the heart, of gratitude, of the Gospel, of glory.

(1.) *New songs are those of the heart.*

HOWEVER melodious and musical the voice may be, 'tis the heart that sends forth the sweetest sounds, sounds resembling those loftier and louder strains above. So that new songs are, the best we have, such as are dictated by the heart, and are most apt to enliven and elevate our dead affections.

GOD has no honour from our natural powers 'till they receive a new byass, by which their course is diverted to their proper channels. That religious songs may inspire us with heavenly joys, they must flow from a new heart, an harmonious mind, and utter'd with a vivacious and lively warmth.

WITH what contempt do we speak of an old song! The newness of the composition is a recommendation of it: The sacrifices of the old nature are the objects of God's disdain and aversion, but the affections of the heart are pleasurable entertainments, as they are the vigorous motions of the new will towards himself.

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Say, O Lord! O my more than Father! thou who givest me constant cause to rejoice, O give me a heart to do so: Always inspire it with divine fervour, that the songs of my mouth may be always new, and meditation of my heart always acceptable in thy sight, *Psf. xix.* which leads to the next head.

(2.) *New songs are songs of gratitude.*

THE compassions of God fail not, like rivers they flow incessantly, and never run dry, therefore 'tis said *they are new every morning.* No instant of time but we experience the tenderness and endearments of divine pity. Now as these are the matter of our daily gladness, so they should be of our daily praise; and when we have spent an eternity in that delightful work, the subject of praise will never be exhausted, *Lam. iii. 23. Job vii. 18. Psalm lxxxix. 1.*

A new song is a song for new blessings: Now as our mercies are new and fresh every morning, so every morning calls for new songs of thanksgiving. One article in the charge given to the Levites was, *that they should stand every morning*

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ing and evening to thank and praise the Lord, that is, they were to praise God by singing psalms when the morning and evening sacrifices were offered, *1 Chron. xxiii. 30.*

THE morning is a very proper season for devotional exercises, when our fatigu'd spirits are repaired and revived by sleep, and our minds are disengaged from the hurry of business. Say therefore with the Psalmist, *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, in the morning will I sing aloud of thy mercies.* Learn of him to date your addresses to heaven in the morning, and in the evening not to forget him who was mindful of you all the day, *Pf. v. 3. lix. 16.*

WHEN sleep, which is the death of each day's life, arrests the body, it casts it into a kind of lethargy; during that deep slumber our earthly possessions, our senses, and our reason are of no use to us: The morning gives a resurrection to all these, and restores wearied nature to all its immunities and enjoyments: Our sensitive and rational powers that were number'd among the dead, being wholly incapacitated

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tated for the time to manage any affair of life, are in the morning restored to their respective functions and offices, and these revolutions demand new sacrifices of praise. A daily succession of blessings requires daily acknowledgments and adorations.

(3.) *New songs are songs of the Gospel.*

THE New Testament introduces into the world a scene of new blessings, blessings of the highest nature, blessings that require new psalms, new hymns, new odes, new songs of acknowledgment. In the Old Testament mention is made of *new songs*, which seem to have a reference to the Evangelic state, wherein there is a rich collection of religious novels.

THERE we find a new covenant, new tongues, a new commandment, a new man, new heavens and earth, new creatures, a new name, a new and living way, a new *Jerusalem*. Behold, says the Apostle, *all things are become new*. Divine grace works so great a change, that wherever it prevails it may be said to create a *new world*; and this calls for
new

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new subsidies of praise, 2 Cor. v. 17. Rev. xxi. 5.

THERE must be new offerings and services, pursuant to the new mode of government set up after the fall, the administration of which is put into the hands of Christ the second *Adam*, whose triumphs are celebrated with *new songs*. *And they sang a new song, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. And every creature heard I saying, Blessing and honour, glory and power to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, Rev. v. 9. xii. 13.*

The Mosaical œconomy is succeeded by a new dispensation, a dispensation illustrated with brighter emanations from the Sun of righteousness: Christianity is a new light; by this the counsels of heaven, that were inconspicuous by the light of nature, are brought to our full view: 'Tis by the Gospel we come to know the original and end of all things, the true source of our misery, the method
of

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of reconciliation, the importance and certainty of pardon and of a future state.

TIME was, when *spiritual songs* were the *peculiarity* of *Jerusalem*, the holy city; when sacred hymns and *Psalms of David* were sung only in *David's land*, but now the joyful sound is spread among the nations. The way to heaven, known only for some time in the land of *Israel*, is now made known in the earth. Among the Gentiles are new songs and acclamations of joy. Has the day-spring from on high visited the dark nations? O let the enlighten'd nations give the great Redeemer a new tribute of praise. *Let all the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee*, Psalm lxxvii.

2, 5.

RELIGIOUS singing constitutes one of the solemn parts of divine worship. Among the primitive Christians psalms of praise and hymns in honour of Christ made a considerable part of their devotion. In the Old Testament 'tis predicted that Gospel times should be times of rejoicing, and that men's praises should be express'd by singing. Our Lord concluded

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cluded the sacred supper and his dear life with singing a hymn sacred to God, who is invariable harmony.

(4.) *New songs are songs of glory.*

WHEN good men die, they retire out of our world into a purer region, where they warble out the praises of God and the Redeemer in new acclamations for ever. New songs are those mysterious songs that shall be for ever sung and be for ever new, always warming them into transport, *Mat. xxvi. 29.*

Songs of glory, tho' everlasting, never wax old, nor grow insipid and flat: Tho' always repeated by the united society of religious spirits they are never out of date; their new affections have a secret strange vertue in them to make old expressions always new.

WE can conceive nothing so delightful as the *songs of heaven*, and these are so strangely new as to be always new, new for ever and ever. Strange and surprizing songs these! never ending, still beginning, still verdant, still fresh, still exhilarating. O blissful state! how contrary to our world, where pleasure when constantly pursued becomes a toil and trouble. ON

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ON earth our comforts are in a perpetual flux, and by degrees grow old and insipid. The most agreeable delights are short-liv'd, they expire in the very act, and leave behind them uneasy reflections; but in heaven its joys are always new, and never subject to new turns and changes. In the pleasures and glories above is no decay. After millions and millions of supposed years they are as fresh and lively as at the first: Those hallelujahs that fill them with raptures never lose their relish.

PLEASURES of the earth like morning dew soon vanish, or like the sound of musick in the ear, that both pleases and dies at once: The fragrant rose fades in time, but the joys of heaven never fade. No ebbing tide in the sea of glory, the scene always new, the taste always delicious, fresh and lively.

EXALTED souls with their raised bodies are always young and vigorous, always in flower of youth, daily renewing their age, but never grow old. In heaven is longevity, or long life, but no old age. No age indeed but the golden age, where
halle-

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hallelujahs always sound in their purity and perfection, and where none are tired by constant exercise. Here body and mind are soon weary in religious duties, and sooner than in worldly labour; God has made the night the sabbath of man's mind as well as body, *viz.* a time of rest. In heaven their years are always youthful, graced with sprightly vigour, always at work and never tired.

AN attention to new truths, and a return of new songs, keep them in alternate employ thro' the unmeasurable lengths of eternity.

2. *How must we sing these new songs?*

WE must do it with knowledge, with the heart, with grace and melody; and with a regard to the honour of Jesus Christ.

(1.) *WE must sing with the understanding.*

As singing is included in prayer, a moral duty, 'tis part of divine worship, which is founded upon knowledge of God and our dependance upon him. It's requisite we should understand what we sing, for if it be not a reasonable service, 'tis not acceptable. We should therefore
know

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know the meaning of the psalms and hymns we sing, that we may not offer the blind to him who is all-seeing.

SING praises with the understanding, says the royal *Psalmist*, i. e. sing as those who know the God they adore, and his will by which they are to regulate all their actions, as those who believe their comforts to be the blessings of Providence, and as those who know the nature, design and grounds of that duty, wherein we honour God by religious songs, *Psal.* xlvii. 7. *1 Cor.* xiv. 15.

WORSHIP is the consequence and fruit of knowledge, this knowledge is the fountain from whence all obedience arises. He who offers up this sacrifice of praise, must not only believe that God exists, but know what he is in Himself, what he is in his Son, what he is to his people, and what he is to his enemies.

2. *WE must sing with the heart.*

Tho' the natural voice be required in this duty, the voice of nature alone is but lip-labour, a mere vocal sound of no significancy, if it be not animated by a vital principle in the heart: For in religion

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ligion no work pleasing and acceptable, but heart-work. Knowledge must be attended with suitable affections, and those affections must rise in proportion to our knowledge, and multiplied obligations.

THE God whose name we would exalt by devotional songs looks at our inward frame, and if these songs be not indited and sung by a pure and upright heart, they are but as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal, a bodily service that profits nothing.

THE great end of religious singing is to affect the passions, to give a relish to religion, and to replenish the heart with joy, therefore the heart should be sensibly toucht with what we sing. *Speaking,* says the apostle, *to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to God,* Eph. v. 19.

GRACE is the rectitude of our nature and actions, and the regular motion of the new creature towards God, the centre of our happiness. In all our converses with him, the heart is all; without it there can be no efforts or strains
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of true devotion. God may communicate gifts to the head, but he dwells in the heart as in a delightful mansion, and never more pleased than when the heart beats time in concerts of thanksgivings and praises unto him, to whom the language of the heart always is an agreeable entertainment.

THE wicked when engaged in this duty of singing psalms, make a sonorous noise, but don't sing with grace and melody in the heart. Their reigning corruptions, like discordant strings, make the musick of the tongue jar, and to emit a sound that's harsh, ungrateful, and offensive; and what offends the divine ear, can never please the divine will. *Thou art*, says the prophet, *near in their mouth, but far from their hearts*, Jer. xii. 2.

It's the dew of grace that descends from above, not nature, not art, not the tongue that sweetens the voice and makes celestial melody, *i. e.* a delightful sound in the ears of God, and at the same time introduces into the soul a scene of silent joy. This holy joy is the life of praise,
and

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and praise is the language of holy joy. Oh let the taste of his goodness in this musical and melodious ordinance make us cry out, Lord evermore give this angelick entertainment, always inspire our hearts and fill them with heavenly fire; that we may long to be there where sacred pleasures and sweeter harmony fills every soul.

THE repmer of him who sings, should correspond with the nature of this holy institution, an institution cloath'd with energy and power to expel all anxious grief, and fill the mourners in *Sion* with joy and gladness. It gives unto them *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness*, Isa. lxi. 3.

WE never appear in so beautiful a form, as when furnisht with the garments of praise, therefore it is said, *Praise is comely for the upright*; it's a beautiful and becoming dress, resembling that of angels, *Psal. xxxiii. 1.* 'tis the ornament of the renewed nature; *praise becometh the righteous*. So the original, that is, praise is a fair and comely grace, to be liked

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liked and desir'd, and by the apostle it's render'd fair or beautiful, *Rom. x. 15.*
Answe. in loc.

MELODY that charms the human ear, moves by rule, and is govern'd by order, and proportion of musical sounds; so grace, which is the melody of an upright heart, is but the affections set in their due proportion, regularity, and order by which they move in their proper sphere.

3. *We must sing with an eye to the Redeemer's glory.* This is highly reasonable since there would have been no room for songs of praise, but for Jesus Christ, thro' whose righteousness and death we are justified and accepted of God: Nothing more equitable than that we should have a peculiar eye to his glory who died for us, yea bore our sins which is more bitter than death. The great Redeemer was the great end of the creation, *all things being created by him, and for him*; therefore he should be the end of all our actions, and *all men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father*, *Col. i. 16.*
John v. 23.

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Sing, (says the apostle *Eph. v. 19.*) *making melody in your heart to the Lord*, who has an indisputable right to your superior esteem and affections. This makes singing spiritual songs an act of divine worship: whatever the matter of our praise be, his glory should be the great end of it.

By the laws of our holy religion, we are instructed to have a peculiar respect to our Lord redeemer in all we do; 'tis to the glory of that dear name we are to live, we are to sing, we are to die. **Hosannah** to the Lamb of God should be the burden of every spiritual song, **Hosannah** in the highest.

SAY, glory be to him, by whose death we have received pardon and peace, grace and glory. While we feed on the fruits of thy love, thy love shall be the subject of our praise and admiration. Let the Redeemer's praises sound in the courts above, let angels join their anthems with those of exalted souls and assist in the melody, and let the wide arches of heaven reflect the image of their united voices. When Lord wilt thou make me meet for
that

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that place where harmony is regent, and divine pleasure knows no praise nor intermission?

3. *Who must sing these new songs?*

This a duty of an extensive nature, it takes in all creatures as well as those that descend from *Adam*. All must bring their voice to this sacred consort without exemption. *Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord; let all breath praise Jah.* So the *Hebrew*, *Psal.* cl. 6.

To sing the glories of God is not only requir'd from the voice of nature, but by the law and gospel: 'tis a holy institution contriv'd for the refreshment of the mind, under the fatigues of obedience. The holy joy that results from it, is a taste of heavenly bliss, and therefore should be consecrated to God as the first fruits of heaven. More particularly, every man, every family, every religious assembly should extol the name of God by singing.

1. *Particular persons should sing these religious songs by themselves, being a part of secret worship.*

HOLY and religious mirth becomes our retirements, so I understand the Apostle

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when he says, *is any merry?* in a cheerful serene frame, *let him* (in the singular number) *sing psalms*, sing *David's psalms with David's spirit, disposition and liveliness*, Jam. v. 13. Psal. vii. 17.

Let the saints sing aloud upon their beds, when by themselves, Psal. cxlix. 5.

At midnight I will arise to give thanks unto thee, Psal. cxix. 62. teaching us when we awake out of sleep, to rouse and stir up our hearts, and tune them for praise. In the dead of night, when others were asleep, *David* was at his devotion, and gets out of his bed that he might shake off drowsiness. What *religious heroism* here? What ardency in this act of zeal! At midnight when sleep is most apt to invade us, even then he prefers *praise* before *rest*. Better want our sleep than God want the glory due to his name.

2. *Persons of all ages and sex.*

Little children must learn to sing psalms: for (Psal. viii. 2.) *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast found strength*. So the *Hebrew*: The LXX renders it, *thou hast perfected praise*, and so 'tis translated by the Apostle, *Mat. xxi. 16.* children should begin

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begin betimes to give glory to the God of their fathers; they and the aged are expressly call'd upon to praise, *Psal.* cxlviii.

12. *Let young men and maidens, old men and children praise the name of Jehovah.*

THO' children are not capable of understanding much, yet 'tis not taking God's name in vain when they are taught to mention it with holy awe and reverence. Of *Samuel* 'tis said, that *he ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod*, 1 Sam. ii. 18. In ver. 19. *his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year.* By this it appears, he was very young, yet 'tis said, he (according to his capacity) *did minister to the Lord*, being employed (very probably) in little menial services about the altar; the pious disposition that appear'd in his conduct, entitled him to the *linen ephod*, the priestly garment, tho' he was not a priest.

Women must sing psalms. In Christ, no difference between male and female, *Gal.* iii. 28. some indeed have made a scruple of this because women are forbid to speak in *the church*, i. e. in the public

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lick assembly, but by that prohibition is meant their speaking with authority, and by way of usurpation over the man, 1 *Tim.* ii. 11, 12. Now their joining with the congregation in singing psalms, is no way inconsistent with their state of subjection, and inferiority. In the song of *Moses*, both men and old women united their voices. In the temple service there were women who sung in distinct companies, not mixt with the men. In a list of those who return'd from *Babylon*, we find two hundred singing men and singing women, *Ezra* ii. 65. *Neh.* vii. 67.

3. *Families should sing these new songs.*

In singing psalms there is religious mirth, and well becomes domestick societies, and ought to be made one branch of their daily service. How recreative and refreshing this duty! Thus we turn the *house* into a *temple*, and a domestick oratory into a resemblance of the heavenly choir.

SOME of *David's* psalms are calculated for families, as *Psalms* xxx. at the dedication of the house of David, *Psalms* ci. *Psalms* cxxviii. *Psalms* cxxxiii. The voice
of

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of rejoycing, is said, to be in the tabernacles of the righteous. It sounds aloud in every family where religion is in the ascendant, *Psalms* cxviii. 15.

EVERY family should be a lesser church, and God own'd in it by a daily tribute of prayer and praise offer'd to God. The primitive Christians concluded their meals with singing to the praise of God.

Solemn assemblies must sing these new songs.

IN the book of psalms, we are frequently summoned to this duty, *Psalms* cxlix. 1. *Sing to the Lord a new song*, and his praise in the church of the saints, *Psalms* cxlix. 1. enter into his gates with confession, his courts with praise, *Psalms* c. 4. the *Hebrew* reads it confession, that is a sacrifice of thanks, *Jer.* xvii. 26. and so does the *Chaldean* paraphrase.

IN prayer the minister is the mouth of the people to God, but in singing his praises every mouth must speak and sing for itself. Among the *Jews* was a peculiar office created for this solemn and sacred exercise.

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THE primitive Christians excelled in this duty, they met together before day, to celebrate the Redeemer's praises. No entertainment so relishable to them. Every day, how gloomy soever, was to them a festival, the time of their imprisonment a time of jubilation, rejoicing and singing, that they were thought worthy to suffer for his Name, who sacrificed his life to deliver them from the wrath to come. In times of danger, *Luther* sung *Psalm* xlv. as a preservative against the storm.

Application.

LAMENT the degeneracy of divine songs, the neglect of psalmody, and of due attention where practised.

I. *Lament the degeneracy of divine songs.*

How universal this corruption? *Plutarch* complained of this grievance in his time: at first those poetick performances that were used as weapons against the efforts of vice and profaneness, are now managed with success against the cause of virtue and religion, that is so far as adulterated poetry can do it: I mean the loose and lascivious writings of our poets especially

especially relating to the stage, where religion becomes the derision and scorn of the audience; where all that has the signature of serious and sacred, is insulted and hissed at.

If magistrates don't take care to reform the stage, the stage will in time undermine the magistrate; for without a due regard to virtue, no society can long subsist.

2. *The neglect of psalmody is matter of just regret*, men's taste for this heavenly duty is almost lost. How many who believe the divine authority of *David's Psalms*, have banisht his *Psalms* out of their houses, and regard those divine compositions no more than obsolete and superannuated laws, that are grown out of use; and what is more sad, where the sound of spiritual songs is heard in families, that religious practice is turned into ridicule and reproach by their neighbours.

In some houses, Almighty God has no tribute of honour paid him by devotion, and family-prayer: his awful name never invoked by social worship, new mercies

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never acknowledged by new songs of praise. Others there are, who will complement God with a prayer, and it may be a chapter at night, but generally so late, that when they should rest in their beds, they are asleep upon their knees; but even among these praise by united voices is seldom heard.

How universal the neglect! Time was when Christian houses were converted into temples of praise, and all the street eccho'd and reflected the sacred sound, and even little children were taught to lisp out their Creator's praise. But now the scene is chang'd: this sacred institution is cast out of doors; and succeeded by a train of ballads, novels, romances, cards, dice, wanton and lascivious songs.

3. *It's to be lamented, that where this duty is performed, 'tis done with so much formality, and so little attention and ardency.*

FEW consider this branch of worship as a real duty, but content themselves with acting a part. How many make a loud noise, but never summon in their affections, and the assistance of heaven; their

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their heart is silent while the mouth sings. In some, the heart and tongue are not concordant and unsound; in others, the heart is asleep when the tongue is awake. The one is at rest while the other is in motion.

Advice.

1. *See you be Christians indeed.*

THAT you have more than a name to live, for the heart will never be in tune till we are in Christ; 'tis he that must articulate, harmonize and recommend the vocal sound: It will make no melody in the divine ear, till animated by the influence of his Spirit.

WHILE we raise the voice, 'tis he that must elevate the heart, and make the music of the voice to sound pleasant to him who sits upon the throne of universal empire: it is grace, not nature that sweetens the voice, and makes the sound reach the mansions of God, whose ears are always open to the prayers and praises of the righteous.

THE human tongue sings, the Christian heart makes the melody: 'tis Christ that *perfumes the* praises, as well as

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the prayers of the saints, Revel. v. 8. 'tis he that tunes the heart, and gives the voice a melodious accent, and a pleasing elevation.

No songs become those who live in sin, but songs of lamentation. Their tender of praise is a vain oblation. A heart without grace, is a heart always out of tune, *Isa.* i. 13.

2. *Let the nature and end of this holy ordinance be the subject of your meditation.*

THIS ordinance is an outward expression of our affection to God in a vocal harmonious way: by it we express our desires after God, our delight in him, and grateful acknowledgment of mercies. It's an act of the human voice; an ordinance, the essence of which lies in an external action, directed to the honour of God; 'tis praising his name by vocal melody.

3. *Entertain a high esteem for it.*

To make a melody with the voice is an institution of God; 'tis not only divine in its original, but glorious in itself, and pleasant in its fruits, therefore we must

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must not look upon singing psalms to be an insignificant rite, or a bare transition from one duty to another.

'Tis no novel invention, but a duty wherewith God was honour'd before the creation of man. These new songs were sung by angels, when the foundation of our earth was laid, *Job xxxviii. 7.*

IN the antediluvian world we find some poetic fragments. After the deluge, we read of *mirth and songs* in *Laban's* house, with which in pretence he would have complemented *Jacob* upon his departure, *Gen. xxxi. 27.* the song of *Moses*, tho' composed under inspiration, seems to be a part of natural worship, it being most consonant to nature thus to express our joy in God. It's natural to us to give vent to a thought that swells with joy.

UNDER the law it was a great part of their tabernacle and temple worship, of which before.

UNDER the gospel, 'tis prescribed as the fruit of the Spirit, melody of the heart is so. See the precepts, *Col. iii. 16.* *Eph. v. 19.* *Jam. v. 13.* these texts amount
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to an institution, which may be sparingly express'd because the duty is so agreeable to the law of nature, which is to give vent to the affections by singing whenever they are full. Now, a divine institution sanctifies the natural expressions of our sense and affection, and thus the word is nigh to us, Rom. x. 8.

SACRIFICES and offerings, and instrumental musick in worship, not being natural duties, or parts of natural religion, are abolish'd under the gospel, in which the ordinances are either in the things themselves, or at least in the signs, very natural.

4. *Attempt the revival of this duty in your families.*

THO' the psalms of *David* are of very ancient date, yet they are not old and obsolete songs, but new songs; new as we in singing them, express new thankfulness for old mercies to his church, and they are always new as they contain proper expressions of gratitude, for those fresh instances of goodness we daily receive.

LET

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LET not want of skill in this noble science, excuse the neglect of it. Do as well as you can, when you can't do as well as you would: where there is little of art, let there be more of pious affection.

If you can't sing psalms, learn to sing them. Have you children? I take it to be your duty to bring them up to sing the Bible psalms, as well as to read the Holy Bible. The neglect of this duty in parents is a criminal defect in the education of children, and is one reason why so many families are strangers to this act of divine worship.

If you are at the head of a family, and can't lead a psalm, be not ashamed of learning; better late than never. The voice is natural, the modulation or turning of it is artificial, therefore persons must learn the tune, before they can sing the psalm. A man may as well think of reading as singing without instruction, or speak against singing psalms as learning to sing them, because no man sings any tune that he has not some way or other learnt. The church of the *Jews*, whose establishment was divine, had those who
instructed

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instructed them to sing the *psalms of David*; *Moses* taught his congregation a new song of thanksgiving, 2 *Chron.* xxiii. 13. *Deut.* xxxi. 22.

IN the Protestant churches abroad all learn to sing psalms, which they do by book without the tiresome method of reading the lines. In the primitive times, there was an extraordinary gift of this kind, which is now ceased: that which we have by skill and labour was then infus'd, and confer'd immediately for the benefit of the church in its infancy.

IN all ages and places of the world, this duty has been highly honoured. All parts of the creation conspire to honour their Maker in tuneful strains, on earth as well as in heaven. Singing is the musick of nature, musick is the joy of nature.

THE *vallies* are said to *sing and shout for joy*, i. e. they furnish us with matter for praise, and would, had they a tongue, give glory to God themselves, *Psal.* lxxv. 13. so *Isa.* xlv. 23. *sing, oh ye heavens, shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, oh ye mountains, oh forest*

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rest and every tree therein, Isa. xlii. 10,
11, 12.

THE air wherein we breathe is the birds musick room, where they warble out their Creator's praise; yea so far related to the upper world, as to be stiled the fowls of heaven, particularly then when they are said to *sing or give a voice among the branches*, Psal. civ. 12. Man is a high-priest to the lower creation, the mouth by which inferior creatures offer up their thanks to their great benefactor.

GOD has honour'd this sacred work by his providence. As they were *singing and praising God the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud*; which was a sign of the divine presence.

HE crown'd it with victories, as they were singing and praising, God smote the enemy, 2 *Chron.* xx. 21. thus a prison salutes *Paul and Silas* with enlargement and liberty as they were singing psalms in chains, *Act.*

SINGING the divine praises is the saints delight on earth. *Yea they shall sing in*
the

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the ways of the Lord, and no wonder, for
they are ways of pleasantness, and it be-
comes the Christian pilgrim to be spiri-
tually pleasant in them, *Psal. cxxxviii. 7.*
Prov. iii.

A psalm is the companion of our
travels, the primitive Christians sung
hymns and psalms at dinner, and some
pleaded for their being used in common
work as a preservative against temptations.
The Christians then had the psalms by
heart, and often recited them at their
callings. The fields and barns sounded
with hallelujahs. We read of five mar-
tyrs, one young man and four women,
who when the fire was flaming about their
ears, sung psalms, which drew tears from
the eyes of their adversaries.

To conclude.

No duty so pleasant, and so apt to
elevate the mind. St. *Austin* wept for
joy, when he heard the people singing
psalms at *Milan*. In former times it af-
fected its auditors with incredible pleasure,
where the words were heard with the
melody.

OUR

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OUR hearts should be toucht with what we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, 'tis the matter affects the heart, and gives relish to what we sing.

WHEN multitudes engage at once in this religious consort, it resembles the confluence of praises above, where they adore and admire in numbers without number. No duty resembles the heavenly service more.

To sing sacred anthems, is the work of angels, 'tis the musick of heaven. Adoration by praise is the highest manner of adoration, the daily exercise of the morning stars: the burden of their song, is *Hallelujah to God upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.* This is their delightful and constant imployment. What voices they have we know not, but we know they sing our Lord Redeemer's praises with a loud voice. They have no tongues, yet have voices to sing the glories of their Almighty benefactor.

EXERCISE as probationers for better singing in the kingdom of our Father;
let

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let this be an encouragement to the duty,
that it is the work you hope to be do-
ing for ever. The saints sing here, but
there in loftier strains, and in whose joy-
ous celebrations are no jars. Heaven is
the native seat of joy, and harmony.
Eternal joy within the veil.

The

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Kingdom.

DISCOURSE VI.

2 CORINTH. V. 17.

Behold all things are become new.

CHRISTIANITY is a new age of the world, and he who has commenced a real Christian is instated in a new creation; the passions and dispositions of tainted nature are discarded, and succeeded by a new and bright state of things, things that are preliminaries of glory.

THE text has its accomplishment in man's spiritual birth, which is a new state in the old world, a resemblance of the heavenly, and the introduction to that new world whose delights are always new, lively and fresh.

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WHEN sinners by a divine influence are made holy, all things in and around them look with a new aspect: The change is transcendently great, being a new creation; a translation from *darkness* to *light*, a light by which they view the remotest things, and all things in their proper natures, positions, and genuine consequences.

THE body that was the instrument of unrighteousness is inspired with new qualities, grace being a resurrection from death to life, which constitutes the saint, and denominates him the reverse of the sinner. Thus *Saul* an avowed enemy to Christianity, by the grace of God becomes a new creature, and a strenuous defender of that new scheme of religion which he had essay'd to extirpate. When the harlot *Lais* tempted one of her old familiars, after he had renounced the hidden works of darkness, and become a new creature, he repel'd the temptation with this, *viz. I am not the same man. Ego non sum ego.*

Behold all things are become new. Text. Note, He who is in Christ is a new creation,

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tion, *καὶνὴ κτίσις*. The old frame of nature is transformed into one intirely new. Religion, 'tis true, was coeval with the creation of intelligent beings, but its beautiful face on our earth was stained and clouded by sin, and the eclipse had been total but for the Sun of righteousness.

IN the kingdom which Christ has erected on earth, all things are created new. Here I propose to shew,

I. *Every thing new about Christ the head of it.*

II. *The subjects of his kingdom are new creatures.*

III. *This new creation was the great end of Christ's coming into this world.*

IV. *The privileges attending this change are new and surprizing: Then make some practical reflections.*

I.

Every thing is new about Christ the Prince of this new kingdom.

HIS appearance in our nature, and in our world is a new thing. Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. This appearance was of an extraordinary nature, 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. His

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HIS *Incarnation* a new and strange thing, and a secret not fathomable by a created understanding. *El Gibbor* the mighty God born of a virgin, born of a sinner yet without sin; to which miraculous event some think the Prophet refers when he says, *The Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man*, q. d. the virgin woman shall encompass and enclose in her womb the man Christ Jesus, *Jer. xxxi. 22.*

THE nativity of Christ, published by a *new star*, was a most surprizing appearance: Born like other children, and increased like them in wisdom and strength tho' he was the wisdom and power of God. He who is a Spirit is made flesh: The immortal Word cloath'd with mortality. He who is Lord of the creation assumes the form of a menial servant.

THE *domesticks* of our Lord were persons inspired with a *new light*, *new life*, and *new love*, and distinguished from the world by acts of new obedience.

Christ is Mediator of the *new covenant*, a covenant made by a holy God with
sinful

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sinful creatures: This pacifick treaty, which is a *new effort* in favour of fallen man, is the surprize and admiration of angels: To treat with holy *Adam* was great condescension in God, but to treat with him, when a rebel, is infinitely greater.

ALL things relative to this covenant are *new*, as a *new heart*, a *new spirit*, *new laws*, a *new Lord Mediator*. Some of the ancient *Jews* have called the *promised Messiah* the *latter Mediator*, *Moses* being the *first*, from whose administration they form'd their idea of the *Messiah*, that he was the Son of God by deputation and adoption, and that his design in coming into our world was not to deliver men from sin, but to rescue the *Jews* out of bondage, and restore the kingdom to *Israel*, and make it an universal empire.

THE life of our Lord opened a *new scene* of actions to the world, actions pure and perfect without spot or stain: A life of such universal purity was a *new thing* on the earth: Never did mortal eye behold such a man, a man without sin before.

fore. A man of sorrows, yet holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, tho' he lived in the midst of them.

EXTEND your thoughts to mount *Golgotha*, and there behold a new and amazing spectacle, *viz. salvation suffering*, the king of terrors in his triumphs, the *Prince of life under the arrest of death*, the *Lamb* dying for the *wolf*, the Shepherd for his sheep, the Physician for his patient, not by compulsion but consent; for his death was an act of his will, and a free-will offering. *He gave himself*, so that he did not die for want of strength in nature, but from the strength of his love.

The sepulchre in which they deposited his sacred and blessed body was a *new place*, never defiled with the corruption of human dust. His resurrection from the dead was as a new birth from the womb of the earth: Never was it known before, that ever a dead man raised himself to life, *Destroy this temple*, said he, *and within three days I'll raise it up*, John ii. 19, 21.

AGAIN,

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AGAIN, In the revelations made by Christ are *new* and strange discoveries, among these you'll find unknown worlds brought to our view: The Gospel is a system of new light, a perspective by which we may see what they do in heaven, and what they suffer in hell.

OUR entrance into the celestial sanctuary is by a *new* and living way, consecrated by blood: A new method of salvation, different from that in paradise and under the law, *Heb. x. 20.*

THE Gospel is a *new* edition of the councils of heaven; here shine those perfections which before the fall were invisible to a created eye, I mean mercy and patience; which, but for Christ's appearance in our nature, had remained in eternal obscurity. Here the new and immortal life, concealed from the nations, is brought to light.

II.

The subjects of Christ's kingdom are new creatures.

GRACE dwells in no other, 'tis their peculiarity, and constitutes this new creation, which consists in a transition from

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a nature dead of the plague of sin, to a state of life and purity.

By *the grace of God I am what I am*, says St. Paul, q. d. 'Tis by the peculiar favour of heaven, that I who had been so long under the dominion of the old depraved nature, should become a new man, and a subject of the new kingdom set up by a new Prince upon whom God has conferred the government of heaven and earth, 1 Cor. xv. 10.

THE whole frame of nature is changed, tho' grace be but in part, yet this ray of Divinity is dispersed thro' every part of the new creature, therefore he is call'd *a new man*, Eph. iv. 24. the mind, will, affections, heart, language, new.

1. *In the understanding is a ray of heavenly light, that makes it yield to the dictates of infinite wisdom.*

By giving the mind a new eye, it gives it another apprehension of things. The kingdom of grace is another climate, in which are new constitutions, and laws, and another method of managing the powers of nature.

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THE vail of darkness transmitted from *Adam* is remov'd, and the mind replenisht with that knowledge which is the root of eternal life. There is no other way of conveying happiness from God to man, or homage from man to God, but by this medium, an illuminated mind.

IN paradise, man's knowledge was his ornament and glory, by the fall man's understanding was clouded, and his posterity are born in a land of darkness, blind to spiritual things: This dark chaos or moral blindness springs from the constitution of corrupt nature, a nature that disrelishes divine truths, because men discern them not in their native lustre; *the natural (or animal) man receives not the things of God—Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd,* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

HENCE it is, that religion is no more regarded by men than pearls by swine, or the light of the sun by a blind man, because they see not its intrinsic excellencies, nor will they be seen, till Christ opens the understanding.

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HE came into the world to remove the clouds that interpos'd between God and the soul; and of darkness, the horror of the world, to make us light in the Lord. He is God's light, and in him we *see light*, Psal. xxxvi. 9. that is, in the Messiah, as some of the *Jews* have expounded it. Say, Lord! illuminate my understanding, and what I see not, teach thou me. Oh! repair and refit my reason to know thee with cleanness! unscale the eyes of my mind, that I may not be blind in midst of sun-beams. Oh re-light by the Holy Spirit, that bright candle which sin put out in paradise! Oh let the inspiration of the Almighty give understanding, open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things!

2. *The will is made flexible, and by a new bias gravitates* (or is strongly carried out) *towards God the centre of the soul.* The old dispositions of *Adam* to sin and self are in some measure eradicated, and the new mind being disintangled from the snare of self, proposes to itself no end but the divine glory, and no rule but the divine will; by which it conducts all its operations. WHY

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WHY will not sinners forsake their sins and return to God? Because they are *held in the cords of sin*, Prov. v. 22. The will of man is in chains, and what is worse, in chains of their own making. Tho' sin be incorporated with their nature, yet they are not forced to sin against their will: Every sin is a free act, and every sinner a voluntary captive, and pleased with the entertainments of his spiritual captivity. Now he who made the will, turns it as the rivers of waters, corrects its corrupt dispositions, delivers it from the tyranny of disorderly affections, and influence of a carnal understanding, and of unwilling, makes the sinner a willing and dutiful subject.

A change in the nature necessarily infers a change in the will, and where the will is renew'd, grace will exert and manifest itself in a strict conformity to the divine will. He never has put on the new man, who has not put off the old man. It's not enough to forbear things forbidden by the law, but we must do what it prescribes. In the new nature is a principle biasing to universal obedience.

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3. *In the affections also is a new bias, which turns their course into their proper channels, ultimately termitating in God the centre of our rest.*

IN the renewed will is a disposition to be govern'd by all the discoveries it can make of the mind of God. He who participates of the divine nature, imitates the Author of grace, in affections, he hates sin as the holy God hates it, because of its inward malignity and turpitude; grieves for it, because it grieves the spirit, and reflects dishonour upon the Almighty. He loves religion as God loves it, because of its native beauty, and of its being a pious imitation of himself.

WERE our nature refin'd from corruption, and restor'd to its original purity, it would need no command nor motive to love God, and to abhor what is opposite to his pleasure; the heart would naturally mount up to heaven on the wings of love, and cry out in the dialect of the *Psalmist*, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there's none upon earth besides thee*, *Psal. lxxiii. 25*. Were it not for sin,

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sin, we should no more need to be urg'd to love God than to love ourselves.

4. *The understanding being rectified and elevated, the memory and conscience return to their duty.*

THE *memory* that was the repository of vanity and trifles, is sanctified to divine purposes, and becomes an armory of celestial truths, precepts, threatnings and promises.

CONSCIENCE, that is stupified by sin, when convinced and excited by the Spirit, reverts to its office as monitor, witness, accuser, judge, a guide.

THE righteous man considers conscience as his inward eye and immediate rule of his actions. Rational creatures are governed by laws; now conscience is *the law* of the mind, *i. e.* the light of conscience is a law to man, a law that is always in force.

CONSCIENCE as a monitor lifts up its voice as a trumpet, saying, *oh! don't do this abominable thing which God hates;* no, says the sincere convert, I will not, I dare not offend so good and so great a Lord. *How can I do this great evil*

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and sin against God? Jer. xlv. 4. Gen.
xxxix. 9.

Its office, as an accuser, is to reclaim from sin, as that of a monitor was to prevent it. Its accusations are friendly and impartial; faithful are the wounds of this friend, infinitely better than the caresses of an enemy. It's a faithful witness, therefore its testimony for or against us is unprejudiced, and therefore not excepted against by the new nature.

IN its judicial capacity, it acts in the name and by the authority of the supreme Judge; and as no crimes in ordinary escape the eye and pen of this ready writer, 'tis never at a loss for want of clear evidence.

As a judge, it absolves the innocent, and condemns the guilty: these judicial acts of conscience respect our state, whether good or bad, and our works, whether well or ill done. Harken therefore to the dictates of conscience, *thine ears shall bear a voice behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk in it*, Isa. xxx. 21.

By nature conscience is misled, and nothing more common than for men to obey

obey carnal-self against the light of it (sacrificing all sentiments of virtue to the satisfaction of selfish desires) and to be displeased with its conduct when it contradicts them, saying, in effect, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?*

BUT good men bless God for conscience, for the stand it makes for God, in taking part with him against sin, and for the peculiar assistance it gives them in the matter of salvation: of all the human powers, none favour our eternal state so much as conscience; it checks all pernicious designs and practices, but eminently favours the thoughts and works that lead to everlasting life. When men's prospects never go beyond the veil, 'tis not probable that perishing earth will dictate the language of immortality.

5. *Where there is a change in the nature there is also a change in the language.*

THERE is a threefold language among men, viz. that of the world, of heaven, and of hell.

THEY who are of a worldly spirit speak the language of the world. He (says, John Baptist) that is of the earth is of the earth,

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earth, (so the Greek) and speaks of the
earth, John iii. 31. Where the heart is
fixt, there the tongue is. They are of the
world, says St. John, therefore speak they
of the world, 1 John iv. 5. their speech
bewrays them. Those sons of the earth
with the serpent lick the dust of it, and
no subjects being so delightful to them as
earthly things, these engross the conver-
sation of the tongue intirely. Words
being the images of our thoughts, we must
conclude, that those who never speak
about any world but this, look for no
other heaven.

THEN there is the *language of hell*,
whereby men dishonour God by cursing,
swearing, flandering, reviling, lying—
Now this kind of speech is of its father
the Devil, 'tis the language of hell, where
all their discourse is a compound of pro-
fane swearing and cursing; therefore a
tongue thus envenomed is said to be *set*
on fire of hell, Jam. iii. 6.

WHEN the heart is swelled and in-
flamed with rash anger, and gives it vent
in transports of passion, rage and fury,
then Satan sets the unruly tongue on
fire.

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fire. So when mens tongues are employed in those black arts of defamation, lying, flandering, backbiting, &c. the fire is kindled by the prince of darkness, who serves the purposes of hell by it.

THERE is also the *language of heaven*, or religious discourse; this is a kind of foreign dialect spoke but by a few, the former being the vulgar language of our country, I mean that of the world and of hell, which language is become most fashionable, to the great scandal of Christianity.

A man's language discovers his country. *Mark xiv. 17.* If you are citizens of *Sion* you speak the language of *Canaan*: Where the mind is framed for heaven, the tongue is so; the conversation turns upon unseen objects: If the heavenly world be your home, your tongues will publish it: If you hope for heaven, you should learn the language of it before you arrive there. This is the practice of the men of the world, who going to inhabit new and distant lands, endeavour after all previous acquaintance with the languages of them, that the
want

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want of them may not prejudice their interests and designs ; and shall the children of the world be wiser in their inferior concerns than the children of light ? shall present things teach us wisdom as men, and shall not the immortal reserve of happiness above direct our practice as Christians ?

6. *A new life is the genuine fruit of a new nature.* The manner of life is a discovery of the man. A swine is known by its delighting in dirty puddle, but a sheep loves clean and fair pastures. A real Christian shews himself by the sanctity of his life, by which he keeps up his interest in God as his only happiness. If we are solicitous and careful to please him, 'tis an evidence of our being renew'd after his image in knowledge and holiness, holiness which is the epitome of all duty, and such a complexion of soul as inspires every duty with liveliness and vigour.

III.

To make men new creatures, was one great end of Christ's incarnation.

He

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HE assumed our offending nature, and in that nature he suffer'd, and restor'd the Creator's image that was razed out by the fall. He came to introduce a general reformation, to turn men from darkness dark as the grave, and irradiate them with celestial light. He brought with him a book of knowledge to be our guide to glory.

HE made his appearance in human flesh with this view, to brighten the human nature, to refine it from dross, and restore it to its first beauty and bliss. It was predicted he should come as a refiner, to purify his church, and make it appear illustrious and without spot, *Mal. iii. 1, 2 3. Eph. v. 26.*

HE descended into a world that lies in wickedness, to deliver that world from the usurpations of Satan: Whoever therefore persists in a course of sin, necessarily excludes himself from his favour.

MORE particularly; to make men new creatures was the end

1. *Of Christ's precepts.*
2. *End of his threatnings.*
3. *End of his promises.*

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4. *End of his life.*
5. *End of his providences.*
6. *Of his death and resurrection.*

1. *To make us new creatures is the great end of Christ's precepts.*

THUS when he commands duties of any kind, as praying, hearing, meditation, vigilance, repentance, self-denial, it is to produce and propagate the heavenly life. His law is the dictate of united wisdom and goodness, it enjoins nothing but what has a direct tendency to felicitate and perfect the human nature, and nothing is prohibited but what is injurious to our eternal interest.

HIS law is spiritual, and demands homage from our thoughts and affections; these must be regulated by his will as well as our external actions: The Christian institution requires a pious frame of mind as well as a holy life.

THE precepts of wisdom bind both the inward and outward man: His law arraigns not only the gross act of impurity, but a vicious thought; condemns malice, which is mental murder, as well as actual killing;

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killing; and forbids covetousness no less than defrauding and cheating.

2. The end of his threatnings is to excite diligence in pursuit and practice of holiness.

THESE were never intended to terrify men from any thing but what tends to debauch and destroy the immortal soul: Since arguments drawn from the vile nature of sin will not impress and influence sinners, he threatens them with eternal darkness, that by a principle of self-preservation they may be moved to flee from the wrath to come.

THUS a kind God threatens delinquents, that he may not punish them: His menaces that are so terrible proceed not from mere anger, or a severe disposition, but from compassion to stupid and heedless sinners.

WHEN he displays the terrors of his wrath, 'tis that sinners may be alarmed out of their lethargy, and terrified into repentance and reformation: He holds up the rod, and shakes it over the head before he strikes the transgressor. Threatnings therefore are not so much the thunders

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ders of justice as the soft and still whif-
pers of mercy and grace, alarming sin-
ners out of their strange security, before
God discharges the artillery of heaven
against them.

3. *The promises of the Gospel are pow-
erful incentives to holiness.*

THUS the Apostle argues — *Having
these promises let us cleanse ourselves from
all filthiness --- perfecting holiness in the
fear of the Lord,* 2 Cor. vii. 1. What
are all the lively and glorious descripti-
ons of heaven but to inflame the mind
with love to virtue and religion. The
promise of the beatifick and unclouded
vision is only made to the *pure in heart,*
and that of eternal life to those *who by
patient continuance in well doing seek for
immortal glory,* Mat. v. 8. Rom. ii. 7.

IF men look for any encouragement in
religion but from the promises, they live
by *sense* and not by *faith*, whereby are
given to us exceeding great and precious
promises, that by these ye might be par-
takers of the divine nature, having es-
caped from the corruption of a sensual
world, 2 Pet. i. 4.

AMONG

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AMONG the great evangelick blessings is the promise of the Spirit to assist us in subduing our impetuous passions, and in acquiring the habits of uprightness and purity.

THE gifts of the Spirit are given to profit withal. Why does he dart beams of light into the dark mind but to make a kind and endearing discovery of our danger and duty? Why has he given us ability to pray, but that we may pray down sin, and bring down sanctifying influences to make our lamps burn brighter, that the day of death may be the day of our triumph? Why does he spring up fears and terrors in the soul, but to work in us a disposition to increase our abhorrence of sin, and to quicken us in pursuit of spiritual perfection.

THE graces of the Spirit are promised for the same end, *viz.* to perfect our recovery from death, and refine our nature for the delicious entertainments above: Faith regards objects that are unseen, things that in their nature are of the highest importance, and in their duration eternal. Why does God bring to our view the
bottomless

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bottomless pit, but that we may decline the path of iniquity that leads down to that intolerable place? Why has he unveil'd the transcendent excellencies of heaven, but to attract our affections, and work in us a prevalent inclination to be thoroughly religious? The consolations of the Spirit also are given to inspire our devotion with vigour, and to excite in us a genuine thirst after the upper spring, that flows with streams of pure unmixt delights, delights that never lose their taste by constant repetition.

4. *One great end of Christ's life was to make men new, and teach them how to live for heaven.*

His sermons were lively comments upon the beauty of holiness and deformity of sin, enforced by persuasives that were most affecting and awful: All his common discourses were calculated to promote and advance serious religion, by instilling into his auditors principles of strict and sublime virtue, and inspiring them with a solicitude about their everlasting state. The whole course of his conversation was one continued lecture of

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of Divinity. This was the end of his actions, which are transmitted to us for our imitation. In his sermons he address'd himself to the ears of men, by his holy life he preached holiness to their eyes.

HIS miraculous works, that were instances of compassion to mankind, are instructions to his followers to treat miserable objects with tenderness: And as to the terrors that might attend those mighty operations, there was an aptitude in them to work in men a dread of his almighty power.

THERE was nothing he said or did that was not for the benefit and good of man. He went up and down doing good. Since therefore his life is design'd for our imitation, it should be our perpetual study. In temper none so affable and sweet, in conversation none more agreeable and instructive.

NEVER was any so dead in affection to the pomp and pleasure of this world; never were its admired glories so trampled upon: With what an air of disdain and contempt did he despise titles of honour, earthly treasures, all popularity and applause:

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applause: Never was there a person so mortified to the delights of the natural life as our blessed Lord, I mean innocent pleasures; even those he seldom tasted, and always look'd upon them with holy indifference.

WITH what ease of mind did he endure reproaches, pain, shame, disesteem, poverty, contradiction of sinners: which are things we have most frightful apprehensions of: So far was his mind from being discomposed with them, that he freely chose for his lot a low condition, a condition that was the contempt, the disdain and scorn of the world.

NOR was his low state a blind choice, for it lay in his power to be the richest under heaven, to juggle *Cæsar* out of his throne, and to triumph at the head of an universal empire; but to shew what small esteem he had for earthly enjoyments, he (tho' heir of all things) chose a life of poverty. He who is the wisdom of God best knew what kind of life best suited this fallen world, where men are betrayed by their passions, and where mens dearest enjoyments become their greatest snares.

THUS

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THUS vital religion was perfectly exemplified in the life of *Christ*, who taught by his practice what he required of others, and made his *conversation an exact resemblance of those rules which he prescribed to others*; so that if ever goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was then, when this lower world was beautified and bless'd with the presence of *Christ*.

5. *The end of all his providences, whether prosperous or afflictive, is to make men new creatures.*

CLOUDS, sunshine, and wind conspire to render the earth fruitful; the one gently warms what the other softens; thus God causes frowns and smiles to work together for our good.

This is one end of prosperity. Those varieties of goodness we enjoy are like so many cords of love to draw us to God: Every flow of beneficence is a loud call to return from the cistern to the uncreated fountain: Our daily blessings are streams of his rich bounty, and so many tender allurements to repentance, *Rom. ii. 4.*

THO'

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THO' we are not worthy of the least mite of a benefit, yet are we loaded with daily benefits, by which the Father of mercies recommends himself to our esteem and choice. God is the centre of souls, and his goodness is as it were the grand magnet by which he is continually drawing us to himself.

THE voice of our daily mercies is to solicit our affections and adherence to our munificent and kind benefactor. Why does he smile upon us by a train of favourable providences, but to master our affections, to make us disaffect our beloved chains, and surrender our hearts to him who *is abundant in goodness*, and who does not act for his own profit but ours? *Exod. xxxiv. 6.*

WHY does God fill our hearts with food and gladness, but to signify how full he is of kind wishes towards us, and how pleased he would be to engage our hearts, which he proposes to do by those repeated acts of benevolence? It is somewhat strange that the goodness of God would not attract our homage and affections more, when an inferior goodness, I

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mean a shadow of goodness in creatures, has so deeply imprest the minds of men as to idolize them. Thus even the polite nations, the *Greek* and *Roman*, adored those creatures which they apprehended to be most beneficial to mankind, as the sun, moon and stars.

THE delightful conveniences of life are so many inducements to love. The pleasure we enjoy in eating and drinking is a taste of his goodness, and a motive to serve so kind a Master with the highest complacency. The proper application therefore of every mercy is to make it subservient to the honour of him in whom we live and move: Every return of necessary supply, every pleasurable instance of providence should raise an altar of incense to the great Benefactor.

Our renovation also is intended by adversity. God in afflicting his people aims at their own advantage, viz. to make them *partakers of his holiness*, and to cause it to shine with greater lustre, *Heb. xii. 11.*

HE corrects his children, that they may bear a greater similitude to him, by being brought to a more exact imitation of his moral excellences : Thus when we are cast into the afflictive furnace, he refines our nature from its earthiness, cures it of its spiritual lethargy, purges out the dross, whereby the Divine virtues in us become more conspicuous. It is by troubles that he animates us in our devotion, makes us thoughtful about a future state, and extinguishes our regards to all present and perishing things.

WHERE prosperity does not conduct men to God, it drives from him : None indeed without their deviations. *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet he'll not learn righteousness*, Eſay xxvi. 10. And when the righteous are at ease, the divine life often suffers, so that if they were not corrected they would be apt to indulge the flesh, and be carried away with its beautiful illusions.

WHEN therefore exercised by trials, we should study to answer God's end in the rod, by forming ourselves to that measure

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measure of purity he aims at, and bring forth fruit in proportion to that care and kindness that appear in the discipline of his house.

THERE are no afflictions but have their commission from heaven: Go (says God to *sickness*) and cast such a sinner on a languishing bed, to rouse him out of his stupid state. Go (says God to *poverty*) and reduce that thoughtless prodigal to the lowest ebb of misery. If he speaks to *reproach*, it goes and divests the proud mortal of his plumes. If God speaks to the *sea*, sink such a ship, and to the *fire*, demolish such a house, 'tis done. Go (says he to *death*) and smite such a man, such a woman, such a child. In all these providences he warns and instructs men, having nothing so much at heart as their reformation. Afflictions are the messengers of kindness and mercy, in order to divert the more tremendous display of justice: They are the efforts of Almighty goodness to draw the affection from sin, and the soul from consummate misery. God does not afflict because he has an uncontrollable

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sway, but because he would have men to be obedient to his voice, and to enter into everlasting rest.

6. *The end of his death was to make men new creatures.*

'Tis said he gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, a people passionately affected to his honour and interest, *Tit. ii. 14.*

HE died to root sin out of our corrupt nature, and to qualify us to be his followers as dear children. His death includes powerful arguments in favour of holiness, and against the dominion of sin: He died not only to make our peace with an offended God, but to spiritualize our nature, and make us capable of reconciliation, and the benefits consequent upon it. He came to prepare for himself a people that should be highly valuable in the eyes of God and angels, and be his everlasting companions in glory.

FOR this purpose did the Son of God appear on earth, to *dissolve the works of the Devil*, to demolish the strong forts of darkness,

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darkness, and destroy the fatal league he had made with mankind by the grand apostacy, 1 *John* iii. 8. λύση.

IN the death of Christ God discovers the utmost detestation of sin, and thereby declares how odious and hateful it should be to us who believe the dignity of the sufferer, and inexpressible bitterness of his passion: To indulge sin for which Christ thus suffered is in effect to embrace the thorns that pierced his sacred head, and the nails that penetrated his dear hands and feet. Who can describe his pain? The very thought of it should enflame our indignation against sin.

WHAT satisfaction can we have in our sins, when we consider what groans, what tears, what blood the least sin cost him? O let it never be said in heaven or earth that we harbour those sins for which our Lord was crucified, dead and buried! Shall those enemies lodge in thy bosom that would not suffer thy dear Lord to live on the earth? How can that be pleasant to thee that was so bitter to thy dear Saviour?

L 3

WHAT,

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WHAT, O ungrateful sinner! not part with those iniquities for which the great Redeemer sacrificed the most valuable life, a life of more importance than heaven and earth. Think therefore of no evil without horror, since no sin, no not the least, could be expiated without blood, and by no blood but that of the Son of God; no other expedient, no other sacrifice, no other remedy could be an effectual atonement.

His resurrection also is an emblem of our renovation; God having raised up his Son Jesus sent him to bless them, in turning every one of them from his iniquity. There is an analogy between them, for as Christ was raised from the dead, even so should we walk in newness of life. His resurrection was a retreat from the grave, so holiness is our retreat in actions and affections from sinful and earthly things, *Acts iii. 26. Rom. vi. 4.*

The

The new and surprizing Privileges
of the new Nature.

DISCOURSE VII.

I Now proceed to the fourth general
head, viz. to shew,
IV.

*That the privileges attending this change
are new and surprizing.*

THE appearance of the Son of God
in our nature, and in our world was a
new thing. *Great is the mystery of god-
liness, God was manifest in the flesh.*

THE new creature is dignified with a
new name, new relations, new honours,
new possessions, new comforts.

1. *The new creature is distinguisht by
a new name, viz. Christian.*

THIS a name peculiar to the new age.
It was in the beginning of this period,
L 4 that

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that professors of the true religion assum'd this noble apellation of Christians from Christ the author of the Christian institution, *Acts xi. 26. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*, the capital of *Syria*, the best city in the eastern parts of the *Roman* empire, and once esteem'd the third city of the world. Those disciples of our Lord were the first that were denominated Christians, about the year of our Lord 41.

BELIEVING *Jews* and *Gentiles* came under this new denomination, in which those distinguishing names, and the differences arising from them are buried: 'till now the followers of Jesus were call'd *devout men, brethren, disciples, believers*; and by their enemies *Nazarenes*.

CHRISTIANS are stiled *sons of God* in opposition to their old name, *sons of Adam*, the former a name of grace, the latter a name of nature, and includes misery as the other does happiness. Our descent from *Adam* is our shame and dishonour, our relation to *Christ* is our glory, *Rev. ii. 17. To him that overcomes I'll give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name,*

i. e.

i. e. the Christian name prophesied *Isa. lxvi. 15. And the Lord shall call his servants by another name*, i. e. Christians, or believers in him who was divinely anointed King, Prophet and Priest.

THE apostle *John*, perhaps, alludes to the *Roman* generals, who after they had conquered remarkable places, took their names from thence, as *Publius Scipio* having beaten *Hannibal* (the city of *Carthage* in *Africa* submitted to the conqueror, into which he enter'd, *A. R. 553.* and triumph'd over *Syphax* King of *Numidia*) had from that time the surname of *Africanus*.

THUS Christ promises a new name to those who conquer in the holy war, a triumphant name, by which they are more than conquerors, because they conquer in death.

THE *white stone* refers to another *Roman custom*; he to whom they gave the white stone was accounted victor, wherever the prizes were played. So in criminal matters the judges gave sentence by casting stones into an urn, the white stone was a mark of acquitment, the black stone, of condemnation. Now

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Now, a new name should carry with it the achievements of a new man, that we may be to him *for a people, for a name, for a praise and for a glory*, Jer. xiii. 11. therefore those who assume the venerable name of Christians ought to *depart from all iniquity*, which is the reverse of the new life.

2. *The new creature has new and noble relatives.*

BEINGS of superior dignity, and that reflect the highest honour upon him. By this new creation, the sincere Christian has a *new Father*, viz. the God of heaven, so the promise runs in the oracles of truth, *I'll be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters*, 2 Cor. vi. 18.

To stand in the relation of children to God, is a high honour, an honour without a rival: the Creator of the man becomes the Father of the new man, adopts him into his family, and thereby into the relation and privileges of a child. By our first birth, we are sons of the earth, slaves to the powers of darkness, partakers of the serpentine nature,

ture, and related to all the corruption in the world. By our second birth, we are the offspring of heaven, denizens of *Sion*, and related to all the perfections of heaven.

BELIEVERS are also represented as having a *new mother*, Gal. iv. 26. *but Jerusalem which is from above is free, which is the mother of us all; 'tis call'd the New Jerusalem*, Rev. iii. 12.

HEREBY they gain a *new brother*, Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to own his followers by that endearing name, *Brethren*, Heb. iii. 11.

FURTHER, by this change all the righteous on earth become their *new associates* and allies: All who travel the narrow way are hewn out of the same rock, are equally heirs of the same kingdom, incorporated into one family by him, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

By this new creation, we stand in a near relation to the holy angels with whom we unite under the same head; these are constituted our guardians, in vertue of which, they become our kind

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and potent auxiliaries in the war against principalities and powers; *Jude*. Take heed you don't dishonour your new relatives: let your life, in some measure, be suitable to your high dignity.

3. *The new creature is entitled to new honours.*

THIS necessarily results from his high birth, as a child of God, who makes all his children princes, and has prepar'd for their entertainment a kingdom beyond the grave, a kingdom full of glories, free from all servile pomp, and the tedious toils of empire.

THE glorious titles wherewith they are embellish'd, are not shadows of glory, but realities, comprehending all the felicities designed by those titles. Earthly crowns that dazzle the eyes of mortals, are but glorious burdens, but in heaven are crowns without thorns, and scepters without a cross.

GOOD men in their progress towards heaven, have the honour to bear the image of the heavenly, and to be of his retinue, who is the image of the invisible God; their whole conduct is an imitation

tation of him. Holiness is the most honourable life, *Col. i. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 49.*

THIS similitude or likeness to God reflects the highest lustre on militant Christians, who are invested with the honour of being Christ's representatives on earth, as Christ was the representative of God our Father, who is in heaven.

Of his fulness have all we received, grace for grace, that is, abundant grace, grace answerable to every grace in Christ, *John i.* Holiness in Christians is the image of God in man, and is such a constitution of soul as maintains in vigour, whatever is essential to it: of such holy men it may be said, they don't live but reign, *Rev. i. 6. he has made us kings and priests unto God.* Holiness is the livery of our Lord's family, and by this the members of it are distinguished from the servants of the world. Holiness which is the splendour of the divine Attributes, is the rectitude and beauty of our nature, by which it forms a beautiful appearance in heaven.

Is God glorious in holiness? So are new creatures in their measure, in obedience to the precept, that says, *Be ye holy,*

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holy, for I am holy. 'Tis to this obedience that ennobling promise is made — *them that honour me, I'll honour*, 1 Pet. i. 16. 1 Sam. ii. 30.

RELIGION is true grandeur, 'tis a ray of divinity, whose lustre, while we act under the directions of it, will shine in all our actions. Our superiours may confer marks of honour upon us, but no honour, no nobility like that wherewith religion adorns its votaries: the way therefore to be truly great and honourable is to be truly good, and one way to be good indeed is to excel others. *If any man serve me*, says the Saviour, *him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26.

HOLINESS, which is the glory of God, is the beauty of a creature, a representation of the Divinity, the complexion of angels that attend the throne of purity. He puts no little honour upon his people when he ranks them among his jewels, and counts them as his treasure and apple of his eye.

USE. *Live up to the dignity of your Christian character*, as you are new creatures, you are to rival angels in obedience:

ence: by a clause in the *Lord's Prayer*, we are taught to pray, that we may do *the will of God on earth, as they do it in heaven*, i. e. with the same alacrity and affection. It was no little reproach to some of the ancient Christians of whom a certain Heathen says, *That there was nothing more glorious in their discourse, and nothing more miserable in their actions.*

4. *The new creature has new possessions and inheritances.*

HIS new birth intitles him to enjoyments that are infinitely superior to houses and fields; habitations are prepared for them in the *New Jerusalem*, of which death gives them possession, and not till then will their situations on earth appear to be earth indeed.

How astonishing the change by death, when earthly cottages shall be converted into mansions of glory, and earth be succeeded by heaven, a wonderful place where is no garden but paradise, no habitations but kingdoms, no seats but thrones, no covering for the head but crowns, no taste but pleasure, no companions but saints and angels!

THE

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THE new creature is born to an estate, an estate which the riches of the *Indies* can't purchase, *viz.* heaven, an inheritance incorruptible, call'd the inheritance of the saints in light, *Col. i. 12. 1 Pet. i. 4.*

THE heavenly estate descends to us by heritage; *has not God chosen the poor of this world, to be rich by Faith, and heirs of the kingdom?* Those who are low in the world, and of no reputation among men, are often the chosen of God and made rich in grace, which is an earnest and pledge of immortal glory, *James ii. 5.*

BELIEVERS are now in a state of minority, and don't actually inherit till they come of age, which is the day of death, and therefore they are call'd *heirs of salvation*, whose title is grounded upon right of blood, the blood of Christ who makes them *joint heirs*, *Heb. i. 14.*

IN heaven they are said to *inherit the promises*, i. e. the eternal blessings promised in the Christian covenant. In this respect they may be said to be legatees, tho' strictly speaking the kingdom is not so much a legacy as an inheritance. A

legacy

legacy is part of an estate, but those who are the children of God inherit the whole. *If we are children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is constituted heir of all things, Heb. i. 2, 14. Rom. viii. 17.*

AWAKE, oh faith! oh hope! look up, and behold the glorious prospect! but one life between us and a kingdom: the precepts of religion are pure, the reward near, high and magnificent. The present consolations of Christianity are distillations from the throne, and first fruits of the celestial harvest.

THE God whom we serve does not only make over heaven to us, but himself as the *portion of our inheritance*, Psal. xvi. 5. referring to the priests who had no part among the people, but the *Lord* was their *inheritance* or part Numb. xviii. 20. That God should be our portion is easily accounted for, as he is the fountain of all happiness, but how we should be his portion is a degree of condescension that's inexplicable. *Israel is the rod of his inheritance, his treasure upon earth, Jerem. x. 16. The Lord's portion is his people*

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people (the object of his delight). *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, Deut. xxxii. 9. He is possessor of all the world, but his church is his vineyard, a sacred enclosure, planted with trees of righteousness, whose fruits are pleasant to his taste.

How different the dispensations of God from those of men. Other heirs (whether apparent or presumptive) wait for the death of relatives before they actually inherit, but the heirs of heaven take possession during their Father's life, their Father who is in heaven.

AMONG men one child, and he a male and first-born generally speaking, inherits, but in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. In religion no regard to sex or priority of birth, but all are equally entitled to the blessing, even life for evermore.

AN estate is lessen'd or incumber'd by being divided among many children, but believers are heirs to an estate that can't be divided or diminished by the multitude of coheirs. As all men here enjoy the sun, so the inhabitants of heaven the blissful inheritance without emulation or envy.

envy. The prospect of so pleasing an entertainment after death can't but in some measure reconcile us to our departure, if not usher in a sea of overflowing comforts ; which leads to the next head.

5. *The new creature has new comforts.*

THIS necessarily flows from what goes before. The Holy Spirit, whose peculiar province it is to sanctify man, is ordained to support and recreate the mind of the renewed man : In the promise he is emphatically stiled *the Comforter*, *John* xiv. 26. In the absence of Christ from the earth, he resides as his agent in believers, and *their joy* is said to be *the fruit of the Spirit*, *Gal.* v. 22.

THIS new creation is our fitness for heaven, a taste of whose pleasures God gives us by the way ; such pleasures the affluence and smiles of the world can never produce. *Thou* (not the world, says *David*) *hast put gladness into my heart*, *Pf.* iv. 7.

OTHER mens comforts are extracted from creatures, those fading flowers ; the Christian's joy is of a celestial extraction, a joy that is solid and durable, and that
strangers

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strangers to God intermeddle not with. The children of this world can't rejoice without their share of the world, all their delight being wrapt up in earthly possessions; and when deprived of these, are disconsolate as those who are rob'd of their gods; whereas *the kingdom of God consists not in meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Peace is the genuine birth of sincere piety, and that piety is the spring of spiritual joy, *Rom. xiv. 17.*

THE comforts of carnal and corrupt men are suck'd from the dry breasts of creatures, those broken cisterns, when these earthly entertainments fail, their comforts die with them. Good men derive their truest satisfaction and pleasure from Christ the fountain of life and light, who infuses sweetness into their bitter cups, and thereby opens a passage to a brighter scene. The prodigal son by a change in his mind, had a change of refreshments, *robes for rags, a fatted calf for husks, a palace for a sty, plenty for poverty, honour for shame, a comfortable life for a miserable.*

THE

THE path of virtue, as it is the only right path, so the most pleasant, it being attended with pleasantness in the way as well as in the end. The peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, enters into their hearts here, before they enter into the joy of the Lord hereafter.

UPON a consciousness of our sincerity, a secret pleasure runs thro' all the powers of renewed nature; hence that expression, *in keeping the statutes of the Lord, there is a great reward.* there's joy in the house of our pilgrimage as well as in the house of durable repose and rest above; only our joys here come short in degrees and permanency, and are oft gloomy and clouded; whereas in heaven there is a constant serenity in every mind, constant smiles in every face.

IF a gleam of bliss attends our imperfect obedience on earth, what strange and mighty extasies of joy will possess the exalted soul in heaven! Here the renewed heart, as it grows in grace, grows big with delights, but in heaven it will as it were succumb and sink under the pressure of joys, when that blissful scene opens, and they find

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find themselves in actual possession of
glory.

Application!

SINCE all things are become new in
real Christians, it concerns us to know
whether we be of that number; and since
our mercies are fresh every morning, God
expects new acknowledgments.

1. *Try in what posture you stand to
God.*

'Tis the Apostle's advice, *examine your-
selves whether you be in the faith; prove
your own selves, know ye not your own
selves, how that Christ is in you except ye
be reprobates?* As if he had said, be di-
ligent and exact in making trial of your
state, let conscience examine it by the
sacred rule, in which you'll find evident
proofs; and be not so sottishly ignorant
of yourselves, as not to know whether you
are real or counterfeit Christians, *2 Cor.*
xiii. 5.

It is of infinite moment, we should
know what will become of us in the
eternal world. Such a discovery is pos-
sible, and 'tis possible we may be mistaken:
therefore we must make diligent search:

How

How else can we distinguish the graces of the Spirit from common virtues? Without a very strict examination, we can't arrive at the knowledge of ourselves: there may be a resemblance of grace without reality. If the prince of darkness can transform himself into the appearance of an angel of light, no wonder his children are so disguised as to appear like the children of light.

How can we clear our title to heaven, if we can't in the dialect of the text, say, *Behold all things are become new*? If any be a Christian indeed, he is a new creation; old things are changed into a state that is entirely new. Now what do you think of your old pride and passion, wrath and malice, those hellish excrescences of nature? Are they hated? Are they extirpated? Are they succeeded by a train of holy and humble thoughts and actions? The old house must be pull'd down before you can erect a new structure. If you would have your soul prosper and be in health, you must expel the poison of corruption.

I. *Is the complexion of your nature new?*

GRACE

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GRACE is the offspring of heaven, it awakes the sleepy soul, and breathes a heavenly vigour on its new created face, and makes it shine as a gem enchased in gold, inflaming the mind to virtuous and spiritual actions.

Is thy mind with all its powers thus irradiated? Can you see and discern things that are invisible to a mortal eye? Have you a more perfect acquaintance with yourselves than heretofore? Are you more sensible of your vanity and vileness? When the sun shines into a room, it discovers innumerable atoms of dust that were not visible before.

If the day star from on high has shin'd into the region of the mind, it has made strange discoveries, it has discover'd unknown enemies, *viz.* that the heart is anti-christ within us, that a sinner is a self destroyer, and by continuing in sin, consents to his own damnation; that an omission of duty is as dangerous, and in some respects more dangerous than the commission of evil; that unbelief was the first sin, and ever since has been the fountain of all sin. Why did our first parents
sin?

sin? Because they did not believe the authority and intention of God in the precept and prohibition. Men are proud because they don't believe that God resists the proud, why are so many men so strangely covetous, but because they don't believe that covetousness is idolatry, that friendship with the world is hostility against heaven, and that he who'll be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. Why do men study revenge, but because they don't believe that they usurp his tribunal to whom vengeance belongs. Would men be hard hearted and uncharitable if they did believe, that he *who gives to the poor, lends to the Lord?* Mat. iii. 10. Jam iv. 6. Jam. iv. 4.

But to return to the subject.

WHERE there is grace, it gives a new turn to the thoughts, and such a turn as makes the will a perfect eccho to the voice of God: the illuminated understanding, like a mighty stream, carries all the passions and affections after it, and puts conscience upon smiting for every sin, even the least enormity. By this new principle we are taught and enabled

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to

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to hate what God hates, and love what he loves, and in the same manner according to our measure; and indeed there is nothing that gives us such a view of the divine nature in us, as the objects of our passions and affections.

2. *Is your conversation new?*

Do you live like those whose natures are new moulded by a divine touch? Do you regulate your speeches and actions by the law of the heart and mind? Grace gives a new and strange turn to human life: he who is the denizon of heaven governs himself by the word of God as his rule, and the life of Christ as his pattern; and thus his *conversation* is said to be in heaven, i. e. conformable to the laws of heaven, *Phil.* iii. 20.

HE who makes the ubiquity of God's essence a real article of his faith, stands in constant awe of his all seeing eye; and this keeps up religion in its vigour. *I would not*, said one of the Reformers, *or speak any thing that I thought Christ would not approve of if he were present with me.*

DID

DID men but consider his presence who is invisible; they would not be so easily overcome by temptations. Should the Almighty appear to us how serious should we be! And oh! Should not God's seeing us have the same influence upon our mind, as our seeing him!

REGENERATION is a transformation of nature, 'tis a change of the whole man, a change from a state of corruption and carnality, into a state of universal purity: By sin we are alienated from holiness, which is the life of God, by grace the life of God is exemplified in the dispositions of the heart, and tenor of life.

AMONG other things, grace evidences itself in our regards to futurity and the present state.

i. *Where there is grace there is a retreat from this present evil world.*

I mean that our affections to all its allurements are in a dying posture, and that we are no more passionately affected with those pleasures that are entertainments proper only for sensual passions and a sensual life.

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THIS self-denial and weanedness from the world, is that part of Christianity call'd in Scripture, *cutting off the right hand, plucking out the right eye, crucifying the flesh, putting off the old man, &c.*

THE animal nature with all its affections and passions must be crucified, our vehement and raging inclinations to all earthly things must be broken and conquer'd, tho' they be as dear to us as our right eye and hand; our darling sins, detested, opposed and forsaken, and where this is done, tho' sin may live, its dominion is taken away.

IF grace predominate, your actions are regulated by the Spirit, the dispositions of corrupted nature are upon the decline and decay, and you'll think nothing too dear to part with to purchase and preserve the testimony of a good conscience.

IF alive unto God, we are not only dead in our affections to sinful, but lawful enjoyments: What is sinful, becomes the object of our antipathy and aversion, and what things are lawful, are only intitled to an indifferency of affection; for

for sincere love to God is an heroick passion, that can find no room in an earthly mind, it aspires and mounts up to heaven like a pure flame, leaving no smoak of lust and sensuality behind it.

WHILE the passions of the heart are captivated to present things, and any object be dearer to us than God, there can be no cessation from sin, nor exemption from the fearful sentence: 'till therefore we are weaned from the breasts of the creature, our real consolations will be but few, and our doubts will be great and growing. An affection to any sin, even the least, will not only render our sincerity questionable, but prove bitter and burdensome, till we renounce it. A sin however secret, seldom goes without a secret sting.

IN a word, to regard God and religion a little, and the world more, is by no means an instance of true obedience; the way to happiness is to obey without reserve, to give God the preference in our esteem.

2. *Where there is grace it displays itself in believing and lively regards to futurity, and things invisible to a mortal eye.* It's

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It's always attended with a life of faith and righteousness, a life to which all men are strangers till they are born *again*; not till then can they have any complacency in conversing with the world of spirits. A world that is always in the view of a good Christian, who may be said to be more an inhabitant of heaven than of earth, because his *conversation* is above, as he is a citizen of heaven, *Phil. iii. 20.* His spiritual, common, private and social conversation is above.

1. *The Christian's spiritual conversation is in heaven.*

In all religious ordinances we have to do with another world; the word is God's voice, and in it we converse with heaven; when the threatnings sound in our ears, we may see hell in them. In prayer and praise we speak to God. Sacraments are heavenly mysteries, heaven and earth meet in them; they signify our union with Christ, Lord of heaven: good Christians, 'tis true, have in them the remains of an earthly nature, but are invested with heavenly dispositions.

2. *Real Christians common conversation is above.* THEIR

THEIR hearts are in heaven, while their heads and hands are employed about secular affairs. Their thoughts take their rise from earthly things to converse with those that are heavenly, in imitation of our blessed Lord, who at *feasts* discoursed of the *bread of life*, and at a *well* of the *water of life*, John vi. — 27. John vii. 37. Let your food remind you of the bread of life, your nocturnal sleep, of everlasting rest; when you awake in the morning, think of the resurrection, at night, meditate on death.

THEY do the common actions of other men, but from another kind of Spirit, and from higher principles, and to nobler ends, i. e. they do all with a view to his honour who sent them into the world. In their callings, they are diligent as their neighbours, not from covetousness, but in obedience to him to whom we are accountable for our actions. Tho' they act like other men, in managing the world, yet don't confine their regards to the present life, which I take to be the Apostle's meaning, when he says, *tho' we walk in the flesh we don't war after the flesh*,

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by making this transitory life our main business, 2 Cor. x. 3.

GRACE has an eye that penetrates beyond the grave; the poor *Gentiles* had their *Elysian fields*, the Mahometans their *sensual Paradise*, but the *glories of heaven* are only seen by the eye of faith; to those vast territories of light and glory, good men direct their lives, hearts, and devotions. Beyond the grave is that better country, a country they never saw, and yet always have in view; there the eternal God shines in his native splendour, and there their spiritual eye is constantly fixt.

THE Christian seeks for a happiness that no mortal eye ever saw, and dreads a misery that no creature on earth ever felt.

3. *The Christian's private conversation is in heaven.*

HE is never more in heaven, than when alone and sequester'd from the distracting hurry of the world. God is with him, and he with God in his religious retirement. *Moses*, when conversing with God in the mount, was alone.

4. *Their*

4. *Their social conversation is above.*

WHEN Christians converse with one another, heaven should make up part of the conversation: were the heavenly state more in our hearts, it would be oftner in our mouths.

IN our discourses, we should consider the dignity of a Christian, and always speak with a decency to our profession; tho' our words may not always be of grace, they must always be with grace, becoming the character of those who are taught of God to speak in the dialect of heaven.

LET an air of piety and virtue adorn every branch of discourse. *Let*, says the Apostle, *your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.* Grace is as it were the salt wherewith our words should be seasoned, Col. iv. 6.

BUT to proceed to the motives, to walk in newness of life, is most pleasant, honourable, easy, safe and advantageous.

I.
This new life is the most honourable.

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OF those in whom all things are become new, it may be said, they don't live but reign. You'll say to reign is indeed a post of honour, but where, how, and over what do they reign? I answer, they reign over those tyrants to which other men are slaves; that is over their imperious lusts and passions, over the world, and Satan the God of it, which are enemies, that usually command the superior and greater part of mankind.

MOST men, (the governours of the earth not excepted) are generally in bondage to their own corruptions, and in a sordid manner serving diverse lusts. Thus *Alexander the Great*, who conquer'd the world, was conquer'd by his own lust, perishing in midst of his debaucheries.

SIN is the disgrace of our nature, grace rolls away the reproach, beautifies the ignoble nature, restores it to its dignity, and thus are we made sons of God, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost. By our first birth we are children of wrath, by this new creation, the children of God, his jewels and a peculiar treasure. How great an honour this!

By this change the human nature is restor'd to a higher degree of reputation than it lost by the fall.

MAN, once the glory of the earth, by sin becomes vile and despicable; by a new nature he is refined and made truly noble, and more magnificent than his neighbours. *Jabez*, who excell'd in a series of pious actions, is said to be *more honourable than his brethren*, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. Psal. xv. 4. Psal. xvi. 3.

To be good is to be great indeed! Holiness is the life of God, and the glory of his eternal nature. Now a religious life is the image of the holy God, in man, and the glory of the new nature. On the other hand, man by his sensual life resembles the life of brutes, creatures that extend their regards no farther then sensitive entertainments, *Psal. xlix. 12, 20.*

YEA our Lord, who doubtless was the best judge of things, compares a sinner's life to that of Devils; *You are*, says he, *of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*; that is, in every sin you make his cruel will your rule, and execute his villanous designs to your own ruin, *John viii. 44.* *Have*

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Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you, says Christ, is a Devil? Not a demoniack or one merely possesst by a Devil, nor an avowed enemy, but a Devil himself in the abstract, one as much in his interest as if he had been sent from hell. A false Apostle is no better than a false angel, both are ranked in the same class in *John* vi. 70.

HOLINESS is the greatest beauty of a creature, being a representation of the unoriginate Divinity: This is the complexion of standing angels who attend the throne. In exalted souls, it shines with a light that represents the brightness of the divine Attributes. In a word, the name and nature of men and angels can never be adorn'd with greater dignity, than holiness.

II.

This new life is the most easy.

CHRIST indeed calls the religion of the gospel a yoke, but it is soft and easy, yea delightful to the gust of the new nature; its pressure gives no pain but where it meets with unsubdued corruption, *Mat.* xi. 29, 30.

WHAT-

WHATEVER difficulties in the way to heaven, we must say, that all things within the verge and compass of religion are easy, and delightful to the religious and devout mind, yea the dark side of the cloud has its advantages; the way that is crowded with thorns and water'd with tears leads to heaven. *My yoke is easy and my burden light*, Mat. xi. 29, 30.

The yoke of doctrine is so, the commands are, in their own nature, mild and easy, and they are so to the new man: no difficulty in the precepts, but what arises from the opposition made by impure and sensual nature, and when that nature is made holy, the road to the *New Jerusalem* will be even and smooth, and all the entertainments by the way, however diversify'd by bitter and sweet, are delectable.

THE yoke of discipline is not severe, for the heaviest cross is comparatively light; and suppose thy life were nothing but a scene of misery, an *eternal weight of glory* will over-balance the greatest and longest sufferings, 2 Cor. iv. 17. Rom. ii. 18.

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ON the other hand, to sin, is putting on an iron yoke, a yoke that galls the conscience, and disturbs the repose of the mind. No burden so heavy as that of sin; secret anguish, remorse, shame, confusion, and fear are its inseparable train. When you are chastised for your iniquities, address the throne for promised aids, kiss the rod and welcome the afflictive message, and the affliction which is the messenger of justice (under whose arrest your comforts are) shall be discharged, and leave behind him glad tidings, *beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*, Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3.

But what shall I do when religious exercises become burdensome to me?

BEFORE I give a direct answer, it may not be amiss to observe, how much a general love to what we do and to all things about us, contributes towards the comfort of life: when we love we may be said to live, *i. e.* not comfortably till then. When we actually cease to love every thing about us, we die: without this common love to things
life

life would be a burden, a nauseous entertainment, a life without satisfaction, a living death.

THIS observation holds good in religion, which without love is a burden to the mind. Love in duty is the life of duty, and gives relish to our intercourse with heaven. Love your God and Christ more, love your souls and heaven more; and every part of religious work will be more easy and pleasant.

SUCH is the property of love that it makes hard things easy, and adds wings to the soul in its flight towards the unseen world. Love being studious to please excites the thoughts to the most arduous and difficult achievements in this holy war: It infuses sweetness into the bitter cup, and makes the disgustful draught go down as a cordial.

JACOB loved *Rachel*, therefore his seven years hard labour seemed as a few days. Where love to God is sincere and prevalent, it will make long services short, and difficult ones easy. Hence 'tis, ordinances that are tedious and troublesome to others, are delightful to the righteous.

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An age of religious work will be but as a few days to one whose affections are in heaven, and who have spiritual sensations of that love shed abroad in the heart, that love which passeth all understanding.

III.

This new life is the most comfortable.

OF all the various methods of living, none more pleasant in the judgment of *Solomon*, who after he had given himself the utmost loose, and tried all the forbidden pleasures of sense, tells us in his penitential reflexions, that those pleasures were more bitter than death, therefore pronounces every life, but that of religion, to be a compound of vanity and vexation of spirit.

IN his collection of proverbs (which are so many moral and divine axioms for the instruction of mankind) we have an encomium of wisdom upon virtue and piety, in whose train alone true and durable pleasure is to be found. 'Tis of religion, he says, *that its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.* To be religious is to live in divine pleasure, to sin is to dash the pleasure with gall, *Prov. iii. 17.* How

How culpable therefore are those who describe religion by a frightful countenance, they who represent it under such an idea, know nothing of its excellencies but by hear-say; for its great end is to make men wise, that they may be happy for ever: He who is possessor of a good conscience, has not only good days, but a daily feast, a perpetual calm in the breast; this made *Paul* a prisoner at the bar *triumph*, when *Felix*, judge on the King's bench, *trembled*.

GRACE and peace are inseparable blessings, lovely and pleasant in our life, and in our death are not divided. The primitive Christians could, even under a cloud, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In all ages Christianity where 'tis real, is of the same nature, impregnated with the same virtue, and productive of the same fruits where equally practised. In all the periods of time, it may be said of those *who walk in the fear of the Lord, that they walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*; being justified by faith they have peace with God.

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IN the due exercise of sincere religion, is an anticipation of future bliss, a prelibation or taste of the celestial; and if it does not always bring down peace on earth, it will undoubtedly bring up the believer into heaven, the pacifick region in which are no storms to disturb the rest of the mind. When grace is arrived at its full maturity, it will be immediately transform'd into glory: To be holy is to be happy, angels are happier than men because they are better.

THERE is not only pleasure at the end, I mean in heaven; but in the way thither. One act of sincere obedience gives a more pleasing reflection, than all the pleasures of the world.

IV.

This new life is the most safe.

THE way of duty is the way of safety. The *citizens of Sion*, like *Sion-hill*, are immoveable. He who walks uprightly walks in a sure path: As innocency is our happiness and honour, so the integrity of the heart is our security and safe conduct; those therefore who would be intitled to the protection of God, must

must be followers of him as dear children,
Prov. x. 9.

No danger but in the path of iniquity. Nothing but sin can endanger our preservation, because nothing else can exclude you from the divine protection: Satan is in chains, and nothing but sin can bring you within his reach. Sin will find out persons in the greatest security, and holiness will secure them in the greatest danger. But I enlarged upon this in the discourse on solitude, therefore I proceed to the next head, *viz.*

V.

This new life is the most profitable.

BUT you'll say how can that be? Since religion teaches not to seek great things for ourselves here; to a carnal man it seems an obstruction to the art of thriving, by curbing his ambitious views, and setting bounds to his desires. *What,* says he, *improve my wealth by religion?* Yes by religion, for *godliness is profitable to all things*, an estate without religion is the portion of those who are without God; *Psal. xvii. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 6.*

GOODNESS

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GOODNESS is the true and satisfying treasure, a treasure that will abide when riches take wings, earthly pleasures expire, and the bubble of honour breaks. *Who will shew us any good*, any probable method of growing rich, is the language of the children of mammon? Not considering they are in a strange country, from whence they can carry no estate but what lies in spirituals: In the moment of death, rich and poor will be upon the level; where then is the advantage of riches and a worldly voluptuous life?

ON the other hand, the riches of grace are durable possessions, and as faithful servants will stand by us in our last extremity, pass with us thro' the dreadful gulph, and accompany us to our Father's house in the heavens; thus he who is possessor of real religion possesses a revenue that's inexhaustible.

RELIGION, in its benign influences, extends to both worlds, as it invests us with his friendship to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. If it requires a vast variety of duties, it confers privileges that are infinitely greater. Eternity
of

of bliss for a few hours labour. An ocean of love and joy is provided for those whose affections, if measur'd, would not amount to a drop of love.

As to the present life, it promises to supply all our real necessities, but not to satisfy all the wild desires of nature. And as to the future life, the mansions of glory are flagrant instances of its wonderful energy and effect. Thus are we taught how to lay up our treasure in the safest bank.

No state like that of the new nature: in its train we find pardon of sin, and power against it; joy and peace within, free access to the throne, freedom from condemnation, a prospect of glory; these are blessings of an important and high nature. Not all the riches of this world can purchase one of these, and one of these is of more value than all the world. So much for the first use, I now proceed to the second advice.

2. Present God with new acknowledgments for old mercies.

BEGIN the new year with grateful reflections on the mercies of the last year, especially

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especially the prolongation of a forfeited life: how many now lodged in the house of silence, many who begun the year with you, and with all the symptoms of longevity. Good God! What indulgence this! How many stript of flesh and blood, and gone we know not where, when I am spar'd.

THE last year's deliverances lay claim to our grateful returns: No plague, or raging evil has happened to our persons or habitations, both secured from the violence of fire and robbers. No mortality among cattle, no deadly blast upon corn. How many have suffered by furious storms, cataracts of rain, flashes of lightning, and other judicial strokes, while we were safe under the shadow of the Almighty.

LET us not forget the goodness that conducted us thro' past difficulties, secured us against all frightful alarms, and loaded us with domestick plenty.

How great! How peculiar our blessings! A Bible in its purity, peace without war, religious liberty without molestation, health without raging diseases, success in affairs without observable obstructions.

I conclude the whole with two motives.

1. *Consider some year will be your last year.*

How many that have been spared last year, must be cut down before this year expires? Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. How many hundred thousands on earth this moment, that will be in eternity before the beginning of another year? And he who knows all things, only knows how many that are now in this assembly, will be among them.

FLATTER not yourselves with hopes of reaching the utmost period of human life. Such hope is self-delusion. Are you young? More die young than live to be old. Are you in health and in the vigour of age? Many die *in their full strength*, in their very perfection, are suddenly cut off without any alarm by sickness. Can a man's estate secure him from the arrest of death? No, *riches profit not in the day of wrath*, will neither divert the stroke nor diminish the horror, *Prov. xxi. 23. Prov. xi. 4.*

Now

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Now why has God lengthened our tranquillity? Is it that we may run over the same course of life? By no means, what is this new year but a new reprieve, a fresh summons to set our house in order?

WHAT we enjoy is only a remnant of life, and no day but part of that remnant is devoured by death. A great part of us is consumed already, yea all our life past is dead already: What need then of redoubling our diligence in working out our salvation with fear, yea and trembling? *Phil. ii. 12.*

2. *Tho' you should live long, you can expect no comfort on a death bed, unless you live well, and know that ye have done so.*

To live and die well is indeed all we have to do upon the earth, and to do so is impossible till all things become new: 'till there be a change in our nature there is no foundation for hope, much less for comfort; for God accepts no person in whom his image does not appear. We can't so much as hope for a joyful end in a state of unregeneracy.

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THE natural man without a change can never reach the world of happy spirits. Heaven is not like the ark of *Noah*, that received the clean and unclean; the fruition of God is not so much by an union of presence as a union of natures; we must therefore be formed after the similitude of our Creator and Redeemer, before we can look into another world with an unterrified mind.

The Cave of Machpela.

DISCOURSE VIII.

GEN. XXIII. 9.

*That he may give me the cave of
Machpela, which is in the end
of the Field.*

AMONG the various maxims peculiar to the Christian institution, ~~that of the apostle, viz. I die daily,~~ is not the least. All men must surrender their lease and die at last; good men *die daily*, always keep *death* in their eye, as he does the *mark* who shoots an arrow. Now since it is appointed that men must die, a short essay on so important a subject can't be thought unseasonable at any time.

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OF all historical narratives none of them form so bright a figure as that of the creation: To introduce into so great a subject minute things, such as the circumstances relating to the purchase of a cave, looks seemingly little and mean, being of no significancy to mankind; but it will appear to be an article of very high importance, when we consider the end of the great historian, which was to shew how God intended by this cave or sepulchre to affix *Abraham* and his posterity to *Canaan*, the land of promise.

IN consequence of this purchase and promise, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* and their wives were buried here. Thus these patriarchs by having a sepulchre of their own took possession of *Palestine*, a land in which the *Jews* after their dispersion have been very desirous to be buried in, it being an article of their faith, viz. that those who expect a part in the resurrection should be buried in the holy land; and hence it is that some of them, when they grow old, transport themselves to *Canaan*, that they may die there.

THIS chapter presents us with a remarkable conference between two princes, *Abraham* the *Hebrew* and *Ephron* the *Hittite*, occasioned by the death of *Sarah*, *Abraham's* wife, of whom two things worthy of remark are said.

1. *The years of her life are recorded*, an honour done to no other woman in Scripture. *Gen. xxiii. 1. Sarah was an hundred and twenty seven years old.*

2. *Sarah is the first for whom lamentation and weeping is mentioned*, *Gen. xxiii. 2.* an instance of peculiar honour done to her name. Thus honour was done to *Jacob* at his funeral by a shower of tears let fall by the *Egyptians*, *Gen. l. 9, 11.*

IN this conference we have an address and answer.

(1.) *Abraham's* address, or petition for a burying place, *Give me the cave of Machpela*, supposed by some to be *Adam's* burying place. Whether the cave was natural or artificial is not evident nor material.

THE address is supported by this argument, *viz.* the necessity of interring

a corps ; ver. 4. *that I may bury my dead out of my sight.* How great the alteration made by death ; *Sarah* once the delight of his eyes, now the object of his dislike and aversion.

(2.) *Ephron's answer*, in which is given to *Abraham* not only a respectful title, but a generous offer of the cave, and the land belonging to it. The purchase being made and perfected, *Abraham* immediately asserts his right by burying his dead. This grave is all the purchase he made in that land where he had sojourned about 60 years, and in this he had the *resurrection* of the dead in his view : The *Jews* call their *burying place the house of the living*, intimating thereby their belief of the bodies rising again to life from the dead.

THIS pious and excellent patriarch had an eye to a remoter kingdom, viz. *heaven*, of which *Canaan* was an emblem or type : *He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, Heb. xi. 10. And indeed, what is religion but *heaven begun on earth*, a state of things that intirely relates to the eternal world? N 3 Now,

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Now, whereas 'tis said, a *cave* or burying place was at the *end of the field*, observe,

That whatever our possessions are, there is a sepulchre at the end of them.

THIS is the moral and the application of the text, and under this idea I shall consider and improve it.

Method.

I. *Shew that among the ancients particular care was taken of the dead. Respect to them was an act of religion.*

II. *That the dead were frequently buried in caves.*

III. *That these caves figuratively consider'd are at the end of every field and possession.*

IV. *Then make some practical reflections.*

I.

In all civilized nations a very particular care was taken of the dead. Their bodies were always treated with devout and religious regards.

To mourn for the dead, to accompany a funeral pomp, and to assist in carrying the corps, were looked upon as works

of mercy and meritorious actions : They did them honour various ways, as by funeral laws, funeral orations, sumptuous sepulchres, epitaphs, &c.

AMONG the *Egyptians* dead bodies were respectable ; having embalmed them, they erected over their graves monumental structures at an infinite expence ; the *Romans* in the infancy of their state buried the dead in their houses, from whence arose that mighty veneration for their *lares* and *penates* or household gods (which were nothing else but the supposed ghosts of those who died in their families) the names given to the little images they had of them in their houses.

AMONG the *Turks* all sepulchres were had in such veneration, even those of another religion, that they punished those who offered any violence to them.

IN the *codex of Theodosius and Justinian* we hear of nothing but severe punishments decreed against those who had done any injury to the dead. It was common to lodge great treasures in the graves, because those places were looked upon as sacred repositories, and therefore more safe than their own houses. A-

AMONG the *heathens* the dead had a right of burial, grounded upon the *will of the gods and human laws*. There were *three* of their *principal gods*, part of whose *office* it was to take care of *funerals*. *Pluto* the son of *Saturn* was worship'd as sovereign over the dead, upon which account his temples were only opened at night. He is supposed to be *Shem*, who first invented funeral solemnities in honour of the dead, which were not so much regarded in the precedent ages.

AFTER burying places were allowed in cities, the dead were kept out of the churches for many years after, by canons and decrees of councils. The present custom of burying bodies in places of worship is contrary to the universal practice of mankind, and was not introduced into the church for many years. Those who desire further satisfaction about this subject may consult a little treatise called *churches no charnel houses*.

Two remarks under this head.

1. *To treat the dead bodies of our fellow mortals with respect and decency is a laudable*

laudable action, but to make our living bodies instruments of God's glory is of far greater importance. The body is of his formation, the object of his daily regard, and designed to be a sharer in the beatific vision; therefore we should consecrate its services as so many victims to God.

TRUE indeed, bodily service without the vital concurrence of the heart, profits nothing; however a solemn cast of the eye towards heaven, the elevation of the hands, the due attention of the ear, a decent behaviour in social worship, are actions becoming those who believe the body to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. And farther, if God had not the adoration of the body, there would be no visible testimony of religion upon the earth. *I beseech therefore that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God as the service of a rational creature; know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that you are not your own? for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body,* Rom. xii. 1. 1 Cor. vi.

19, 20.

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2. *The sight of dead bodies, those triumphs of death, should remind us of Adam's first sin, the sin that introduced death, that king of terrors, into our world.*

IMMORTALITY was the privilege of man in the paradisaical state; if he had never transgress'd, he had never return'd to dust: How malignant the first sin, that provoked God to revoke and make void that special prerogative? It was for that sin that the almighty Sovereign pass'd sentence of death, not only upon *Adam* but all his posterity; and thus the first man murder'd all his children before they were born. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by that sin, so death pass'd upon all men, who all by this sin became mortal, Rom. v. 12.*

THE thought of death seizing upon our nature, sensibly affected *our Lord*, who wept at the grave of *Lazarus*, wept to see a body designed for immortality, despoil'd of life, and become the entertainment of worms; wept to see so glorious a structure demolished by the arm of death, and crumbled to dust.

OH

OH cruel sin! who can describe thy malignant quality? The deadly force of thy poison? How ghastly and formidable is thy visage, oh king of terrors! Pain, anguish, fatigues of life, decrepit age, are a kind of paradise compared with what we fear of death, the idea of which includes in it horror in all its forms: Yea life itself grows a disease at last, so that to beg for a longer life is only to pray for a lingering death.

II.

The dead were frequently buried in caves.

As the ancients had various and different modes in burying their dead, so they had various and different places, in which they were interr'd. Some buried in their houses and gardens, others at a distance from their habitations; some in open fields; others in silent vaults.

THE most noted sepulchres in the holy land were in caverns, natural or artificial, hewn and hollow'd out of rocks or mountains for that end, probably in imitation of this princely patriarch, *Abraham* their forefather.

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Aaron, the first high-priest of the Jews, was buried in a cave on *mount Hor* in the wilderness of *Mosera*; and very probably the body of *Moses* was interr'd by angels in a cave at the foot of *mount Pisgah*. The grave of *Elisha* was in a niche or *cave in a rock*, since they let down into it a dead man, that return'd to life by touching the prophet's bones, *2 Kings* xiii. 21.

THE graves of the kings of *Judah* were also in rocks. Our Saviour's sepulchre was hewn out of a rock by *Joseph of Arimathea*, for himself. *Lazarus* was buried in a rock, since it had a stone rolled on the mouth of it, upon the removal of which he came forth.

USE. *Be not so solicitous for your place of burial as for a glorious resurrection:* 'Tis not very material where the forsaken body be deposited, whether it be burnt, or buried in earth or water; wherever its lodgment be, 'tis within the reach of the sound of the last trumpet: When the *Arch-angel* sounds a retreat from the grave, the dead (startled at the noise) will awake, throw off the chains of death, and leave their gloomy habitations. Now

Now if we don't honour God with our bodies here, how can we expect any comfort upon their reunion to the soul? Oh how sad to have our bodies rais'd and all our joints new set, to be rack'd and tortured on the wheel for ever. Must there be a resurrection? O let the thought of it deter us from sinning with our bodies, since they are as liable to punishment as the soul. On the other hand, if we make our bodies instruments of righteousness, then shall they triumph, when the grave opens its door, and resigns its spoils.

III.

These caves are at the end of every field and possession.

No comforts upon the earth but what are composed of changeables: A train of constant vicissitudes and changes attends every condition of life; these vicissitudes have a voice, their language is, prepare for your final change, of which we are forerunners, a change that brings men into an invariable state of joy or sorrow.

THE earth itself is as a spacious field with a fiery cave at the end of it; 'tis kept in store, reserv'd unto fire against the day of judgment.

THE *former world* was destroyed by a mighty inundation, or overflowing of water; but our *present world* is kept in store by his Λόγος, reserved for the last conflagration, 2 Pet. iii. 7.

THE earth itself, on the surface of which we live, will be consumed, and has no other reason for its present existence, than the furnishing the blessed society above with their destin'd number; and when the number of the elect is accomplished, *the earth* (in its superficies) *and the works that are therein shall be burnt up*, Eph. i. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Now in all our comforts here, whether intellectual or sensitive, are mixtures.

No intellectual pleasures without alloy.

Solomon, who tried all things in which men place their happiness, begun with intellectual entertainments, and tried how far these would go towards the perfect repose of the mind; and none more like-
ly

ly than himself to make the experiment, being a person of an universal genius, exalted understanding, and endued with the spirit of wisdom.

HE excelled in all parts of learning, and carried his discoveries beyond all men that ever went before him: He was acquainted with all the works and operations of nature, and extracted from it all the felicities 'twas capable of giving. Now what satisfaction had he in all his disquisitions and researches? Why, the result of all his contemplations, he tells us, was *vanity and vexation of spirit. In much wisdom is grief, and he that encreases in knowledge encreaseth sorrow; that which is crooked can't be made straight*, Eccl. i. 15, 18.

HE surpass'd all men in wisdom, but with all his philosophical enquiries, experiments and examinations, he could not restore nature to its primitive rectitude and happiness.

YEA, men of letters are generally more miserable men than others, because they have more sensible perceptions of calamities incident to the human nature.

BUT

BUT how comes our search after knowledge and wisdom to be so toilsome to the mind? Perhaps, this may be a punishment for *Adam's* curiosity in coveting forbidden knowledge, and to be as wise as God who knows all things.

Solomon consider'd and examined all things that came within the verge of philosophical enquiry: He expanded his thoughts, and stretch'd them out over all the vast universe, and nothing was hid from his penetrating eye: And the fruit of his study was, *viz.* that all the knowledge and wisdom of this world has a large embasement of vanity and vexation attending it. The language of every creature he conversed with being, *this is not the true road to bliss, true happiness is not in me.*

2. *No delights arising from the things of sense without mixture.*

HEALTH, riches, children, life, and all its agreeable entertainments are expiring things; and the comforts that flow from them precarious, and held at another's will.

I.

Health, which is the richest present of nature, is a fading flower.

THIS is the best of temporal blessings, it being what gives relish to all our enjoyments, and without which no man can enjoy himself, or comforts with any satisfaction. How flat and insipid would all the entertainments of life be (however pleasant in themselves) without this lively vigour of body; yea what a deadly burden would life be to all degrees of men, those of overgrown estates not excepted, without bodily health and soundness of constitution in some measure?

THE cave at the end of this pleasant field of health, is sickness and all painful sensations. Pain indeed is the only real evil our nature is incident to; 'tis to this we are born and bred: In this we live, our life being little better than a scene of disappointments and disorders.

It's remarkable how every part of our body is susceptible of pain, but very few capable of the perception of pleasure. Besides, to make a man happy on earth, there must be a confluence of a great many

ny good things, but one thing alone (as a wound) is enough to make us miserable.

ACKNOWLEDGE the divine goodness in preserving so precarious and important a blessing as health so long; that health which the poet calls the *salt and standing pleasure of life*. Is thy constitution healthy and sound? Say, *Jehovah is the strength of my life and length of my days*. Our bodies, those wonderful fabricks of nature, are but houses of clay, naturally frail and brittle, every moment liable to the attack of innumerable distempers.

How often have we been delivered from an army of diseases, an army that has ravaged and laid waste the country about us! What mighty desolations in our vicinity! How often have we been witnesses to the groans of those who died, and to the tears of surviving relatives! How many families intirely eradicated and rooted up, while we have been safe and untouched in midst of the dreadful storm!

How short-liv'd is our health! How soon will this pleasant scene change, and be succeeded by those awful solemnities
of

of sickness, death, and judgment? How many are well, and ill, and dead in the same hour? Don't therefore reckon the distance of sickness and death by the degrees of your present health.

TAKE heed of setting health and sickness, life and death at too great a distance from each other. Even in *Paradise* the tree of death was planted near the tree of life. Did innocent man need a moment of death? Much more do we who are born under a sentence of death.

ARE you now in perfect health? Have you no symptoms of approaching mortality? If you say you are now hearty and well, how long will ye continue so?

ARE you more safe because you don't think of a change, or do you imagine death to be a great way off because 'tis not much in your thoughts? How fatal your mistake! for death is at the end of the field in which is your daily walk; and as the Lord liveth there is but a step between you and that last enemy.

2.

Riches are pleasant possessions, but make themselves wings and flee away, Prov. xxiii. 5.

ALWAYS

ALWAYS do so at death, if not sooner ; as uncertain in duration as they are unsatisfying in their nature. What surprising changes even within the verge of our own knowledge ! What transformations in families ! Riches and poverty, honour and disgrace display themselves by turns, as the Almighty Governor shifts the scene.

IN the affairs of human life there is a tide, which if you take at the flood will conduct to wealth, but if you miss that opportunity, your life will be like a voyage in shallow waters. But after all, there is uncertainty in every thing. How many tumble down from elevated stations ? Who can secure his vessel in such a sea, where smiles and frowns roll with alternate waves, like the succession of day and night ?

IN the disquietudes and vexations of life riches leave us, and can administer no relief to body or mind when tortur'd with pain and anguish ; and in death we leave them, and go to a world where the glories of the earth are of no use or significance.

How

How foolish then are those who pursue this world with that vehemency and eagerness as if it were *a field of bliss without a cave at the end of it*; that is, as if it were a blissful enjoyment that would never end or alter.

How do earthly things attract and engage our daily attention! What pains do men take in accumulating and treasuring up cumbersome wealth! in essaying to aggrandize their families, and to perpetuate a name; as if earth were the seat of immortality, and riches the immortal possessions of it.

Eat, drink, and be merry, said the rich man, *for thou hast much goods laid up for many years: Thou fool*, says God, *this night thy soul shall be required of thee*. How terrible the sound of this alarm! Oh deluded wretch! Might he say, *must I die to night who have made such ample provision for many years? What must I die, and not taste the fruits of my labour under the sun?*

He had great possessions in reserve for a number of years, but that very night he must part with them and with his life.

life. Sad parting ! to part with his wealth and his life at once. The sensual and sordid creature, was so intent upon the field of this world, that he saw not the cave at the end of it, 'till his feet stumbled upon the dark mountains, and the miserable worldling dropt into it : And is not this their case who make no provision for another world, while they labour and toil hard for the meat that perisheth.

MEN have been long baffled in their enquiries after happiness here, and yet every age renews the enquiry as if they were sure to succeed in their researches at last ; *this their way is their folly, and yet their posterity approve their sayings, and walk in their way, or delight in their mouth,* as the Hebrew is, intimating how they applauded the conduct of their predecessors, received their precepts, and imitated their practice with pleasure, *Psalms*

lxxix. v. 3. How strange the infatuation *Happiness is not in me,* has been the language of the creature in all ages, and yet no age believes the report. Thus men become fools thro' choice, and not want
of

of intelligence and information; and what is yet more amazing is, that as the worldling grows in years this folly grows more extravagant in him.

THE folly of worldly men never so apparent as at death; not till then will it appear that all their labour on earth was labour in vain, because they had spent their time in treasuring up riches in a world they were hastning from, and had made no provision for the world they were hastning to, and in which they were to abide for ever.

Children, those blessings of the womb, don't always prove blessings.

NOTHING more certain, than uncertainty in them as well as in other secular enjoyments. *Happy is he,* says the Psalmist, *whose quiver is full of these arrows,* but these arrows often prove thorns and spears in their parents side, *Psalm cxxvii.*

WITH what joy did *Adam* and *Eve* congratulate one another upon the birth of *Cain* their first-born, so pleased were they as if he had been the *promised seed*,

and some are of opinion, they believed him to be so; but how were their hopes disappointed? They trusted that he was the person that would roll away their reproach, and rebuild their sinking family, but he proved a fratricide, a murderer of his pious brother, an inexpressible vexation and grief to his parents.

To *Abraham*, father of the faithful, was born a son, to whose mother an angel appears, and directs her to call him *Ismael*, a word that signifies *Jehovah has heard thy affliction*, which they might very well interpret a signal of hope; but he proved a *wild man*, fierce and furious. The *Chaldee* and *Syriac* expounds it, *a wild ass among men*, Gen. xvi. 12.

THIS oracle was first accomplished in the person of *Ismael*, who dwelt in the wilderness of *Paran*, called by the angel *phere Adam*, a *wild ass man*, from whom sprung *Mahomet*, the *Arabian Impostor*. To *Isaac* the son of promise was born *Esau*, who was born a man of the field, and by an oath irrevocable sold his birth-right for a trifle, Gen. xx. 29, 34.

The Cave of Machpela. 289

GOOD old *Eli*, a judge and high-priest in *Israel*, had two sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, that were sons of *Belial*, according to the *Syriac* version, *sons of wickedness*, 1 Sam. ii. 12. *David* promised no little satisfaction in *Absalom*, a favourite son, but he turns traitor and dies in rebellion against his royal and indulgent father.

WHEN our children are as it were in blossom, how is our hope raised in expectation of good fruit? but alas! how often do our hopes prove abortive, and our children turned into degenerate vines and wasted fields?

HAVE you children? And are they unto you green and pleasant as a field in spring? Say, *in this field is a cave*, that is, something to check the relish of our immoderate pleasure in them. Thus God frequently embitters to us those enjoyments in which we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction, and he does it with this kind view, that our disappointment in the creature may drive us to himself, in whose favour is life without death, and in whose presence are pleasures without any ungrateful mixtures.

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LET

LET not parents therefore be blindly fond of their children: By overvaluing these living comforts they undervalue the fountain of life, and provoke him to curse their blessings. To idolize them is the ready way to make them a vexation of spirit to us; for by making gods of them we do in effect make them devils to us.

AND here it may not be amiss to consider that the birth of a child is a summons of death to parents, because it comes in their room, and is to succeed to their possessions: When therefore you look on the rising generation say, *these are they who have taken our houses over our heads*, to these we must surrender all our estates, and it will not be long but a writ of ejection will be served upon us. Why then should not their entrance into the world remind us of our exit and departure out of it?

4.

Life itself is a possession over the grave.

So terrible is death, that the painful moments of life are comparatively sweet. Even they dread to die, who never knew

a happy day in life. And tho' nothing so dear as life, yet nothing so frail, 'tis in perpetual motion, always rolling along towards the deadly cave.

DEATH is the final end of all living: Life past is dead already, and it should not be forgot that we begin to die as soon as we begin to live: The first moment of life is the first step towards the cave.

ALL things within the circuit of nature are in constant motion, and yet still where they were: The wind, the sea, the sun, the stars, after all their circumrotations return to the places from whence they came: Thus man, after all his traverses and turns in the field of the world, is but where he was, never satisfied, and never stands still, never 'till death arrests his motion. What is the life of man but a mere tautology, a vain repetition of the same actions over again and again. And thus we move round the field 'till the head grows vertiginous (by age, distempers, or sad accidents) and we drop into the cave.

How amazing this! *viz.* that man who is the glory of the earth, and finishing stroke of the creation! man who was framed with sanctity of reason after the similitude of his Almighty Maker! man that was designed for immortality! how amazing, I say, is it to see such a creature disrobed of his glories, and for his wild ambition doomed to the earth. What are the various disquietments of body and mind, but monitions and items of death, that melancholy and fatal catastrophe of life. This! this is it that sullies the character of all flesh, and infuses bitterness into every pleasant cup.

THE briers and thorns that overspread the earth are emblems of the sorrows that attend human life. To be miserable is the property of our fallen nature; to live is to be in trouble; that which may be term'd a happy life is only as a sun-shine in a shower; death, which is the last trouble of this life, gives, in the prospect of it, a fresh accent to every trouble. Thus what puts an end to our woes encreases our horror.

How

The Cave of Machpela. 293

How many lesser caves do we fall into by the way, before we fall into the last and tremendous gulph, from whence there is no return? Sunk with sorrow, fear, pain and secret anguish before we sink into the pit, *all our days are sorrows*. Life not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself in the abstract, *Eccl. ii. 23*.

What is man! poor fallen man! but *misery alive, misery in human shape!* for all misery centers in him, and dwells in no other part of the visible world besides; hence it is that some of the ancients reckoned an early death among the greatest blessings. *The favourites of the gods die young*, says the Comedian. See *Sieur de Charron of wisdom*.

THIS life, tho' lengthened out to the utmost period, is short and of uncertain duration. Distempers and distresses, like so many worms, lie perpetually gnawing at the root of the tree of life, and tho' the next moment may be the last, yet how many walk as if there were no sepulchral cave at the end of it, or as if they by a patent sign'd in heaven were to linger out an unlimited term of years

on earth, putting off all thoughts of living well, till they can live no longer, and this they do, tho' they know that life grows shorter and shorter, and their great work is yet unfinished.

STRANGE! That a life so short and so vexatious should be thus caress'd, and regarded more than a long! long! long eternity!

Application.

1. *Consider the end of all things is at hand.*

THE cave, at no great distance from any part of the field. The end of all time near, nearer yet is the end of our share of it.

THE world in which we live, must die. In its last moments all the elements shall arm against sinners. *How, says Dr. Taylor, shall the air be troubled with sudden and violent whirlwinds, dark tempests, horrible thunders, and furious flashes of lightning? How shall the earth tremble with dreadful earthquakes; casting forth, as it were, whole vulcanoes of fire and sulphur? How shall the sea then rage, and mount up its proud waves above the clouds,*

clouds, as if they meant to overwhelm the whole earth? Then shall the bottomless pit burst open, and cast forth so thick a smoak as shall darken the sun and air. How shall it then fare with sinners, when after all shall come that general fire, which shall either fall from heaven, or ascend out of hell, or from both? Whither shall the miserable fly when that deluge of fire shall so encompass them, as no place of safety shall be left? *His Contempl.*

ALL temporal things are then to conclude; introductory thereto, is another event most dreadful, and that is, their entrance into the unseen world by death. Now, the gates of death are always open: Die we must, and that soon. We can't ensure to ourselves one hour, how then come we to promise ourselves many years?

PERSUADE thyself, that thou art born under a sentence of death, and that thy life is only a short-lived reprieve. Say therefore, I, even I, must die as well as others; that which has happened to them must happen to me, the decree is irrevocable;

cable; ah how soon must I exchange time for eternity?

What then, you'll say, must I do? Why, as soon as your reason and convictions begin to bloom, act like rational creatures, live by rules of virtue and religion, like those who stand in so near a relation to God and another world. When you walk in your fields, houses and shops, or think of your estates, relatives and friends, say the end of all these is at hand; and when I die, the world will be at an end with me, the objects of my senses will cease; sun, moon and stars, earth, fire and water become invisible and useless.

2. *Learn to live much in a little time.*

You border upon the silent cave, redouble your diligence in the vineyard, ripen your hopes of glory, live answerable to the destin'd purposes of life, and in so doing you'll learn to die: to die well is a sacred art we learn by living well, *i. e.* by treading in his steps who never err'd from the path leading to heaven. Christianity implies an intire change of heart and life, and a sincere dedication of the whole man to Christ, who came
to

to the earth to teach us how to walk in the narrow way that leads to life.

ONE great end of Christ's descent into this world was to put an end to the arbitrary and destructive desires and designs of carnal nature, and to instruct us how to do the will of God on earth, as they do it in heaven. Yea, salvation from sin, the cause of hell, was more his work than salvation from hell, the effect of sin. Can we suppose that he saves only from the guilt and punishment; and leave the sinful nature unchanged? He came not only to deliver from the wrath to come, but from sin the procuring cause of that wrath. And what is the great end of his resurrection to a new life; but to quicken us to a newness of life, the genuine fruit of a new nature?

3. *Consider seriously the awful consequences of death.*

THE agonies of dying tho' terrible are the least part of death, even birds and beasts feel these pains and no more: But to a dying man, death appears with another aspect, the king of terrors having by growing distempers, terrified the sin-

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ner, takes the soul as it were by the hand, and conducts it to the door that opens to eternity, a strange world where it enters upon an unalterable state of things.

MAN upon a death bed, is to consider, that he is passing out of time to eternity, and that within a few minutes, he is to be what he must be for ever; and oh! How dreadful the thought of exchanging the present life for an eternity of pain!

AT the hour of death, every one is judged, either into a state of interminable misery or bliss. When the final stroke is given, the state of man is, by an irreversible statute, fixt and settled. How dreadful then must that moment be, when a poor dying creature stands trembling on the brink of the precipice, and has nothing in view but a frightful hideous gulph?

CAN any thing be more dreadful? Since to die, in the consequence of it, is to be happy or miserable for ever: And can any thing be of greater importance, than to consider which of these two eternal states is like to be our lot and portion for ever?

4. *Look*

4. *Look on your burying places, as your only proper possessions.*

DUST we are, and unto dust we must return. Since life is short, we can hold nothing long on earth but our graves; in these dark and melancholy habitations, men make their longest abode, therefore the grave is stiled our *long home*, the house of our world; for this world is not ours, who are only pilgrims and strangers upon the face of the earth.

THE field and appurtenances thereto belonging, we hold by one life only; death is the surrender of that life: All other possessions held by vertue of it, necessarily forsake us the moment we die; only the cave at the end of the field remains ours, and that only till the awful day of decision, and then God will renew the lease of life, and make it perpetual.

THEN will the judge make a dividend or distribution of the eternal world, between the children of men. *Behold*, says our Lord, *I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be*, Rev. xxii. 12.

To

To the wicked he will give those gloomy regions, that are enclosed with impenetrable darkness, where darkness is the terror of the place, where there is no star-beam but fire unquenchable, no floods but tears, no storms nor winds, but sighs, groans and lamentations, no friends, but furies, no habitations, but sulphureous and sultry caves of night; where indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, rage and despair sit in every countenance, and are as so many trophies erected to the glory of God's vindictive perfections.

ON the other hand, to the righteous will he give the realms of beatifick light, light that shin'd before the creation of the earth, sun, moon and stars; realms where the tide of glory, honour and peace ever flows without ebbing, and where unmixt pleasures like overflowing streams break in upon the mind without intermission.

5. *Secure your title to those fields, that have no sepulchre at the end of them, viz. grace and glory.*

THE gospel is a field in which Christ the pearl of great price may be found; if he be yours, you have a right to an indefeasible possession. In his arms you are always safe, adhere to his government and you are sure of his friendship. *How shall I know that he is my friend?* If he be, then the same desires and aversions imploy your thoughts, and you participate of each other's griefs and joys: If one be struck, the other is wounded; to hurt his servants is to touch the apple of his eye. On the other hand, they are tender of his glory, which is dearer to them than life, therefore can't see his laws violated without concern and effusion of silent tears, *Psal. cxix.*

It will not be a waste of time, to enquire into your claim of right to his favour, and the inheritance he has purchased for his followers, for there may be a nearness to the kingdom of heaven by profession, when there is no aptitude or fitness for its entertainments for want of renovation! If I may so speak, says one, there is such a thing as a graceless Christianity, faith without holiness, a Christianity without Christ.

GRACE

GRACE wherever it predominates, and over-rules, is an imitation of God in his moral perfections, it works in us a disposition and desire to display the glory of them, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9.

GRACE is called the *incorruptible seed*. Our regeneration is not owing to any corruptible principles, but to the unchangeable word of the immortal God. The operations of grace may be suspended, the comforts of it interrupted, *but the seed of God*, the divine principle, *remains*, 1 *Pet.* i. 23.

THERE is a field of glory, make your title to it secure and safe. The *Romans* went to the temple of *honour*, thro' the temple of *virtue*. Holiness is the way to to happiness. There must be a transition from nature to grace before we can pass from earth to heaven.

HEAVEN is a field that has no cave at the end of it, 'tis the sanctuary of life, a durable possession, of which you shall never be deprived.

THE body that is doomed to the cave, shall rise never to die any more. At the resurrection the sensitive powers shall be refined,

refined, and recover their proper operations and satisfactions; in those blissful seats, the ear shall be constantly regal'd with the most delightful melody; the eye for ever pleased with scenes infinitely agreeable and entertaining.

HEAVEN a serene and perpetual day; no clouds to eclipse those children of light, or interrupt their pleasant sensations.

No part of the creation like the glorious field above, where there is rest without sleep, refreshment without food, garments without cloaths, light without the sun, life without death, possessions without a cave. We must therefore conclude, that the day of our dissolution is better, and vastly preferable to that of our birth, for by our birth we commence inhabitants of a miserable earth, but by death we are transplanted into heaven, the paradise of God: Hence the primitive Christians stiled the *anniversary day of the martyrs death, the day of their nativity*, because they were then born into a better world, where there is infinite variety to encrease delights, and eternity to perpetuate them.

To

To conclude.

THE poor who possess neither house nor land, are entitled to a grave, in which they must lodge till the dawn of the great day, when all the prisons of death must open their gates and surrender their prisoners.

HAIL happy hour! When soul and body shall be married a second time, and be cloath'd with the glory that excels hyperbolical glory; and be for ever with the Lord, the Lord our righteousness, to whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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F I N I S.

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